



THE DESERVING INDIA

MONTHLY EDITORIALS

01 JULY TO 30 JULY



An illustration at the top of the page shows a large globe in the center. Four stylized human figures are positioned around the globe, appearing to touch or support it. To the right of the globe, there are several white wind turbines. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds. In the bottom left corner, there is a small icon of a recycling symbol. In the bottom right corner, there is a small icon of a solar panel.

CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

THE SUPREME COURT'S JUDGMENT ENHANCES CLIMATE RIGHTS, URGING SYSTEMATIC AND COMPREHENSIVE CLIMATE LEGISLATION IN INDIA.

The Supreme Court of India's recent judgment in *M.K. Ranjith Singh and Ors. vs. Union of India & Ors.* has significantly impacted India's climate change jurisprudence. By reading into the Constitution, the Court has recognized the right to be free from climate change's adverse effects, rooted in the right to life and equality (Articles 21 and 14). This opens avenues for climate litigation, empowering citizens to demand government action.

The judgment highlights the need for systematic climate governance. It raises crucial questions about prioritizing large-scale energy projects over environmental conservation and climate adaptation. One approach is the slow, incremental adaptation of climate legislation, integrating protection measures and community resilience over time.

Alternatively, the judgment suggests an 'umbrella legislation' for comprehensive climate governance. This legislation would incorporate structured frameworks, sustainable development policies, and regulatory mechanisms. India must develop its model, drawing lessons from international experiences, to address its unique vulnerabilities and development needs.

For effective enforcement, India must strengthen its institutional frameworks, ensuring robust public participation and transparency. Collaborative governance involving state and local bodies, along with clear accountability measures, is essential. Aligning national and sub-national efforts with sustainable development goals can drive India's transition towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient future. Implementing such comprehensive legislation would mark a significant step in mainstreaming climate action and achieving sustainable progress.

ECONOMIC

GROWTH CHALLENGES

Despite high GDP growth, insufficient job creation and increasing inequality have raised concerns about the economic strategy's effectiveness and sustainability.

The Indian economy needs to generate 25 million-plus jobs over the next five years to employ the currently unemployed population. Despite the Modi government's claims of an 8% GDP growth, this has not translated into sufficient job creation. Official statistics reveal that unemployment for people aged 15 or above dropped from 4.2% in 2021 to 3.1% in 2023, but this does not align with the high GDP growth rate. The 2024 general election results indicate that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has suffered due to this employment crisis, losing its parliamentary majority and forming a coalition with ideologically contrary parties.

The income inequality gap has widened over the last two decades, with the top 1% of the population controlling 40% of the country's wealth. This disparity, described as "K-shaped" recovery, sees a rise in wealth for the few and a decline for many. Claims of lifting 25 crore people out of poverty and rapid GDP growth have been met with skepticism among voters. The BJP's economic management has been questioned, particularly with the sharp decline in GDP from 8% in 2019-20 to 3.8% in the fourth quarter of 2019-20.

The government's strategy needs a significant overhaul. The need for a new long-term economic plan is emphasized, especially as the BJP's coalition lacks a cohesive economic ideology. The private sector and government must focus on creating sustainable jobs in agriculture, industry, and services, with particular attention to the informal sectors.

AI JURISPRUDENCE

The article explores the legal intricacies of Generative AI in India, focusing on copyright laws and liability provisions.



The article delves into the legal complexities and challenges posed by Generative AI (GAI) within Indian jurisprudence, particularly highlighting the "safe harbour" provisions under Section 79 of the IT Act. This section provides intermediaries with immunity from liability for user-generated content, contingent on due diligence. However, the application to GAI outputs presents difficulties, especially when GAI acts beyond a mere passive information transmitter. The discussion extends to the ambiguities in copyright laws regarding the authorship of GAI-generated content, raising questions about whether such outputs can be considered human or entity-authored under the Copyright Act of 1957. These legal grey areas necessitate new regulatory frameworks.

A "sandbox approach" is proposed to allow for regulatory experimentation to better understand and address the legal implications of GAI outputs. This approach emphasizes the importance of data rights and responsibilities, suggesting the need for updated training models and enhanced data integrity. The article also addresses broader privacy concerns, citing the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and underscores the urgent need for comprehensive regulations that ensure a balance between technological innovation and the protection of user rights and data.



REGULATORY

APPROVAL CONCERNS



The Indian regulatory authority approved the vaccine before completing Phase III trials, raising ethical and integrity concerns.

On January 10, 2021, Rashida Bee and other representatives wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the then Minister of Health and Family Welfare, alleging ethical violations in Bharat Biotech's Covaxin clinical trial at People's Hospital in Bhopal. The letter highlighted issues such as exploitation of vulnerable participants, non-reporting of adverse events, and a lack of monitoring and follow-up.

The Indian regulatory authority, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, approved the vaccine candidate prior to the completion of Phase III trials under "Clinical Trial Mode," raising concerns about ethics and integrity. Dr. Jacob Puliyeel, a member of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), emphasized the need for independent review of clinical trials. Historical incidents like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Willowbrook Hepatitis Study reflect the persistent issues with informed consent and exploitation in clinical trials. Whistle-blowers like Nancy Olivieri and others have faced significant repercussions, highlighting the risks involved in exposing unethical practices.

In India, the protection for whistle-blowers is limited, as seen in the case of Anil Rai, who exposed the Vyapam scam. Innovative therapies often face regulatory challenges, and the ethics surrounding them are crucial. The deeper issues include power dynamics, loyalty, and social conformity, which hinder the ethical conduct of clinical trials. Without addressing these underlying issues, ethical violations in medical research will continue to persist.

WPV1 RESURGENCE

Wild-type poliovirus type-1 cases are rising in Pakistan and Afghanistan, posing a significant threat to eradication efforts. Increased environmental detection and refugee movements heighten the risk of international spread.

The goal of eradicating wild-type poliovirus type-1 (WPV1) by 2026 faces challenges as cases resurge in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both countries reported six WPV1 cases each in 2023, down from two in Afghanistan and 20 in Pakistan in 2022. However, 2024 has already seen six cases in Afghanistan and five in Pakistan, indicating a potential rise in total cases. More concerning is the increased detection of WPV1 in environmental samples. In 2023, 125 positive samples from 28 districts in Pakistan were found, with 119 linked to a genetic cluster from Afghanistan. By June 1, 2024, 153 samples from 39 districts were positive, alongside 34 samples from Afghanistan by April 8, 2024. The World Health Organization warns that positive samples in critical areas like Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar-Khyber blocks, and Kandahar pose a significant risk to past progress. This rise reflects incomplete polio campaign coverage and issues like fake vaccination markings. While urban children in Pakistan are mostly immunized, unvaccinated ones remain at risk. The situation in Pakistan appears worse, with WPV1 spread predominantly in Afghanistan in 2022 now being detected in Pakistan. The risk of international spread is heightened by the movement of over half a million Afghan refugees, with many unvaccinated children in southern Afghanistan, posing a significant cross-border threat.



06-072024

RELIGION AND JUDICIARY

This article explores the Indian judiciary's role in defining and protecting essential religious practices amid evolving societal norms.

The article discusses the intersection of spiritual orientation, religious practices, and the judiciary in India. It

begins with a quote from Chief Justice Latham, emphasizing the deep-rooted presence of religion in human society. A significant case highlighted is *P. Navin Kumar (2024)*, where Justice G.R. Swaminathan of the Madras High Court allowed the religious practice of angapradakshinam, involving devotees rolling over banana leaves, sparking debate on essential religious practices. The article notes that while religious freedom is protected under the Indian Constitution, it is subject to public order, health, and morality, leading to judicial scrutiny of what constitutes essential practices. Justice Swaminathan argued for privacy in religious expression but acknowledged the need for further evaluation.

The article also references landmark judgments, such as *Commissioner of Police vs Acharya Jagadishwarananda Avadhuta (2004)*, which differentiated between essential and non-essential practices, and *Sri Venkataramana Devaru vs State of Mysore (1958)*, which upheld that only essential religious practices merit constitutional protection. It discusses the challenges courts face in balancing individual rights with broader societal interests, highlighting cases like *Bijoe Emmanuel vs State of Kerala (1986)* and *Shayara Bano vs Union of India (2017)* to illustrate varying judicial approaches. Ultimately, the piece reflects on the evolving nature of religious freedoms and the courts' role in defining and protecting essential practices amid changing societal norms.



CLIMATE LAW DEVELOPMENT

The amendments to Uttar Pradesh's anti-conversion law intensify its unconstitutional aspects, curtailing fundamental rights and enabling misuse.

In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of India recognized the right to be free from adverse climate impacts, rooted in the right to life and equality. This decision emphasizes the importance of establishing a systemic approach to climate change in India. The new government faces the challenge of tailoring climate laws to the Indian context, ensuring that development choices at all levels prioritize low-carbon and climate-resilient futures.

Effective climate laws should involve continuous, detailed consideration of development impacts and trade-offs, focusing on social justice. A fragmented, top-down approach is inadequate; instead, coordinated efforts across sectors and governance levels are essential. This includes improving policy integration and developing mechanisms for evaluation and enforcement.

A proposed solution is the creation of a "low-carbon development commission," composed of experts and representatives from both national and state levels. This body would guide practical climate-resilient development and facilitate knowledge-sharing. Additionally, comprehensive climate laws should incorporate social equity, prioritizing vulnerable communities and fostering a transition towards a sustainable, resilient society. Institutional reforms are necessary to implement climate laws effectively, requiring collaboration among various ministries and a robust local administrative capacity. The commission would help address climate impacts systematically, recommending long-term strategies and overseeing the integration of climate policies into all aspects of development.

The proposed framework aims to navigate development choices, ensuring that India's growth is both sustainable and resilient, safeguarding the future against climate change impacts.

INDIGENOUS HPV VACCINE

India's indigenous HPV vaccine, Cervavac, faces scrutiny over its efficacy, pricing, and the broader implications of transitioning vaccine development from public to private sectors.

India's public health sphere recently engaged in a debate about the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine's role in preventing cervical cancer. Despite HPV's association with cervical cancer, it's not proven that HPV causes it, as only a few of the 200 strains are linked to cancer. Studies by the Population Based Cancer Registries (PBCR) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reveal declining trends in cervical cancer in India and globally, regardless of vaccine coverage. The overzealous push for universal vaccination against HPV overlooks the need for targeted immunization of high-risk groups, such as sexually active teenagers.

The Serum Institute of India (SII) developed and promoted 'Cervavac' as an affordable indigenous HPV vaccine. However, it took nearly two decades to introduce a patented HPV vaccine globally. Vaccine development underwent changes due to the TRIPS agreement, leading to a shift from public research to private development and monopolization. This transition facilitated private production but also increased costs significantly.

India's focus on promoting indigenous HPV vaccines comes amid concerns about pricing and availability compared to existing vaccines. For example, Shantha Biotechnics and Bharat Biotech, among others, have HPV vaccines in the pipeline, with competitive pricing essential for success. Public health experts emphasize the need for rigorous scrutiny and cost-effective strategies to ensure the widespread success of HPV vaccination programs.





BUDGET

OVERVIEW

The final Budget for 2024-25 focuses on medium-term growth and employment opportunities through domestic growth drivers amid global economic slowdown.

The final Budget for 2024-25, set to be presented on July 23, 2024, aims to provide medium-term growth and employment opportunities, focusing on domestic growth drivers due to global economic slowdown. The short-term goal is a minimum 7% growth, with a medium-term target of sustaining real GDP growth at 7-7.5%. The fiscal deficit to GDP ratio is expected to reduce to 3% over the next three to four years. Investment needs to grow sustainably, with a gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) of 35% of GDP to achieve 7% growth. The employment objective emphasizes labor-intensive sectors.

The Budget projects gross tax revenues (GTR) at 34.65 lakh crore, a 10% increase from 2023-24. Expected real GDP growth is 5-8%, with a GTR magnitude of 38.8 lakh crore. Non-tax revenues are also projected to increase. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) aims for a liquidity deficit of 2.1 lakh crore, with tax rationalization expected without major sacrifices.

Increased rural income and investment are anticipated, driven by supportive policies. Government investment and private investment are expected to drive growth. The budget aims for a stable fiscal policy with the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio to reduce to 5.1% in 2024-25 and 3% over three to four years. This budget is crucial for maintaining economic stability and promoting long-term growth.



INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

“ India’s demographic journey highlights significant progress in health and fertility but faces challenges in poverty, gender inequality, and urbanization, requiring comprehensive efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

India’s demographic journey has seen significant progress and challenges. The world population reached five billion in 1987, and today, India faces issues such as poverty, gender inequality, and ageing. Despite predictions of widespread poverty and hunger in the 1960s and 1970s, India’s fertility rates declined, and health parameters improved, with notable reductions in maternal and child mortality. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the importance of addressing gender equality, urban migration, and political representation.

Rapid urbanization threatens infrastructure, while silent issues like the low political representation of women persist. The SDGs aim to tackle food security, health, poverty, and gender equality, but India’s progress must consider its demographic changes. Key initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana have made strides in addressing poverty and healthcare needs. However, the proportion of the population under poverty remains significant, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of India’s demographic shifts for sustainable development. Achieving the SDGs by 2030 requires addressing demographic transitions, improving job opportunities, and strengthening social safety nets for vulnerable populations.





12-07-2024

MUSLIM WOMEN MAINTENANCE

The Supreme Court affirmed that divorced Muslim women can seek maintenance under secular laws, clarifying their rights under the CrPC and the 1986 Act coexist.

The Supreme Court of India has affirmed that divorced Muslim women can seek maintenance under the secular Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), despite the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, which appeared to limit their relief to Muslim personal law. This 1986 Act aimed to counter the Shah Bano case (1985) verdict, which allowed Muslim women to seek maintenance under Section 125 of CrPC. Although the 1986 law was upheld in 2001, its provisions were interpreted to not exclude secular remedies. Different High Courts had varied interpretations on whether Muslim women should use Section 3 of the 1986 Act or Section 125 of CrPC.

The recent Supreme Court verdict by Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih clarifies that the 1986 Act's codification of a Muslim woman's rights, including maintenance during the Iddat period and return of mehr and dowry, is supplementary to her right to seek maintenance under CrPC. Justice Masih emphasized that both personal law and secular remedies for maintenance can coexist. Justice Nagarathna highlighted that the CrPC aims to prevent vagrancy among women by mandating husband support. This verdict expands Muslim women's rights and secures their access to secular maintenance provisions, neutralizing the belief that these rights were extinguished by the 1986 Act.

PDS IMPACT

ON HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE



The Public Distribution System (PDS) significantly impacts household expenditure by increasing the ability of poorer households to purchase a wider variety of foods and services, enhancing overall food security and well-being.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) aims to ensure food security in India, with up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population eligible for subsidised food grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. Subsidising food grains can free up household resources for other items like vegetables, milk, pulses, eggs, fish, meat, and protein-rich foods, potentially diversifying their consumption.

The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23, by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), investigates the impact of PDS food items on household expenditure. The survey includes data on both food and non-food items, focusing on out-of-pocket expenses and services utilized. Insurance is considered an investment and not included in the survey.

The report uses the Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) to analyze household spending. The NSSO suggests values for food and non-food items for each state and sector (rural and urban). For instance, the value of items consumed by the bottom 5% of the rural population is estimated at 1,373, and 2,001 for urban areas. The study indicates that imputed values for food items at subsidised rates increase the MPCE, particularly for the poorest households.

Imputations show that PDS significantly affects household expenditure, particularly for those at the bottom of the income distribution, increasing their ability to purchase a wider variety of foods and services. The study underscores the importance of PDS in enhancing food security and overall household well-being.

THE PROBLEM

WITH KARNATAKA GIG WORKERS BILL



The Karnataka Gig Workers Bill focuses on social welfare but fails to address essential employment relations and labor rights for gig workers.

Last month, Karnataka introduced the draft Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2024, aiming to provide social security for platform-based gig workers. This bill resembles Rajasthan's similar act but focuses on welfare without addressing employment relations, crucial for gig workers. With projections of 23.5 million gig workers by 2030, addressing employment relations is essential due to their significant role in the economy. Unlike traditional workers, gig workers' employment terms are set by aggregators. This model leaves gig workers seeking fair treatment and security. The UK Supreme Court ruled Uber as an employer, applying labor laws to gig workers, a precedent not fully adopted in India. The bill does not address minimum wages, working hours, or leave entitlements, focusing on welfare over legal employment rights.

The Karnataka Bill's failure to define employment relations and protective labor laws leaves gig workers without essential rights, similar to issues in Rajasthan's act. This gap in regulation affects their safety, wages, and overall job security, highlighting the need for more comprehensive legislation.

UNION BUDGET

KEY ISSUES

“The upcoming Union Budget must address employment issues, support MSMEs, and focus on inclusive growth to meet the electorate's expectations and drive sustainable economic development.”



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to present the Union Budget on July 23, which is highly anticipated as it reflects the policy and politics of the BJP-led coalition government, currently holding 240 seats in the Lok Sabha, down from 303 in 2019. The electorate has expressed dissatisfaction with the government's economic policies, making this Budget crucial. A significant election issue for 2024 is employment, with reports highlighting severe employment problems, including high levels of underemployment, especially among the youth. Real incomes have contracted due to informalization and poor job quality, while the incomes of casual labor have increased, likely due to programs like MGNREGA. Women's participation in the labor market remains low and largely informal. The MSME sector, vital for domestic consumption and low-income groups, has faced significant contraction, affected by demonetization, GST, and the COVID-19 lockdown. Previous budgets focused on CAPEX and startups but failed to address high-value and inclusive growth. This Budget must shift focus from growth for its own sake to generating employment and inclusive growth, with special attention needed for MSMEs and social sectors like education, health, and housing for the underprivileged. As India aims to become the third-largest economy, addressing joblessness and poor-quality employment is crucial, requiring a rethought approach to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

SURPRISE

ACCELERATION IN INFLATION



June saw an unexpected rise in inflation, driven mainly by food prices, complicating efforts to control economic stability amidst erratic rains and uneven crop production

Erratic rains have made it more challenging to control inflation, with retail price gains showing a surprising acceleration in June. The provisional Consumer Price Index (CPI) indicated inflation snapping a five-month downtrend and quickening to 5.08%, up from 4.80% in May. The primary driver was food prices. The year-on-year food price inflation, measured by the Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI), rose by 67 basis points in June to 9.36%, marking the fastest sequential acceleration in 11 months. Notably, food prices increased by 3.17% from May, contributing significantly to the broader CPI rise of 1.33%.

This unpredictability in food price gains has concerned monetary policymakers, as reflected in RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra's emphasis on the persistent food price shocks during the Monetary Policy Committee meeting. The CFPI's nine sub-categories posted monthly gains, with vegetables showing the highest increases. Prices for potatoes, onions, and tomatoes saw significant year-on-year rises of 57.6%, 58.5%, and 26.4%, respectively.

The outlook for food prices remains grim, with Department of Consumer Affairs data showing substantial year-on-year increases in retail prices for potatoes, onions, and tomatoes as of mid-July. Cereals also saw price hikes, with rice and wheat prices up by nearly 10% and 6%, respectively. The IMD data indicated a 2% deficit in nationwide precipitation since June, with 11 out of 36 meteorological sub-divisions classified as deficient. This situation, affecting key food-growing areas like Punjab, complicates efforts to slow the pace of inflation.

ARREST AND LIBERTY



“ The Supreme Court of India raised concerns about the necessity of proving the need for arrest under the PMLA and the routine practice of higher courts staying bail orders.

The Supreme Court of India has recently made significant observations regarding personal liberty in the context of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). These observations focus on whether officers arresting individuals on money-laundering charges must demonstrate the necessity for arrest for it to be valid, and the ease with which courts stay bail orders. A Bench led by Justice Sanjiv Khanna granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, questioning the legality of his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The verdict raised the issue of whether the ED needs to prove the necessity to arrest someone under Section 19 of the PMLA, which requires officers to have "reason to believe" in the person's guilt before arresting them.

The PMLA mandates that officers record reasons for arrest and convey grounds to the accused. The Supreme Court emphasized that the decision to arrest should comply with statutory requirements and be subject to judicial examination. Arrests under the PMLA should not be arbitrary, and investigations should consider both incriminating and exculpatory evidence. Additionally, the Court criticized the frequent practice of higher courts staying bail orders, noting that such stays should be rare and based on clear grounds, rather than routine responses to prosecutorial pressure. These observations underscore the need to balance the enforcement of law with the protection of personal liberty.

FOREST

RESOURCE EXPLOITATION

Unchecked exploitation has led to significant global forest loss since the early 20th century.



The unchecked exploitation of forest resources has led to significant forest loss. The World Bank reports a loss of 10 million square kilometers of forests since the early 20th century. The United Nations declared 2021-2030 the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, targeting the restoration of 350 million hectares of degraded land. Tree planting is a favored method due to its potential to combat climate change and support biodiversity. India's Van Mahotsava, initiated in 1950, exemplifies this long-standing effort.

Recent large-scale tree planting drives have faced criticism for limited community involvement, lack of post-planting measures, and promoting monoculture, which is less effective for carbon sequestration and biodiversity. These issues highlight the need for more localized and ecologically sensitive approaches. Studies indicate that planting in unsuitable areas, such as grasslands, can harm ecosystems, increase wildfire risks, and exacerbate global warming. Ensuring post-planting care and involving local communities are crucial for success.

India faces additional challenges, with significant forest areas under encroachment and degradation. Despite these issues, India's commitment to global climate goals remains strong. Recent policy changes emphasize the importance of community involvement, adequate financing, and technical considerations to enhance the effectiveness of restoration efforts and create resilient forests.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

Conflicting reports and data highlight challenges in measuring and reporting accurate employment statistics in India.



The article discusses the unemployment issue in India, highlighting conflicting reports and statements from various sources. Prime Minister Narendra Modi criticized the Opposition for spreading false narratives about unemployment, emphasizing infrastructure projects that will create jobs. The RBI's 'Data Manual' and KLEMS database describe methods for measuring productivity but not employment. The CMIE's data showed an unemployment rate of 7.8% in June 2024, with discrepancies in data from different sources such as ASUSE and government surveys. The organized and unorganized sectors have distinct challenges in data collection, with the unorganized sector's data being sparse and unreliable. Differences in definitions and data sources contribute to varying estimates of employment. The rural-urban ratio and shocks from events like the pandemic have further complicated the data. The article concludes that differing methodologies and data quality issues make it difficult to ascertain the true extent of unemployment, suggesting the need for better data collection and reporting practices. Public confusion is mainly due to the differences in how data are collected and reported across various platforms.

DISABILITY

ACCOMMODATIONS

The article emphasizes the need for reasonable accommodations for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and suggests a model to reduce institutional reluctance by providing financial incentives and cost-sharing measures.



The principle of reasonable accommodations (RA) is integral to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, which ensures equality for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). RAs include adjustments like ramps, assistive technologies, and modified job requirements. Public and private institutions can be exempt from RAs if they prove undue burden. However, many Indian institutions still resist implementing RAs due to financial concerns and perceived undue burden, often adopting efficiency-focused approaches instead of welfare-based strategies.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) outlines factors to determine undue burden, yet institutions' reluctance persists. A uniform legal standard to assess undue burden is essential. States should sensitize institutions about inexpensive RA procurement, offer incentives like tax credits, and share RA costs. This incentive and cost-sharing model would reduce disadvantage and stigma for PwDs and encourage RA provision. The RPwD Act's Section 86 highlights creating a National Fund for PwDs, supported by banks and financial institutions, but its scope is limited. To enhance this, continuous fund flow and annual budget inclusion are necessary.

Institutions must address resource deficits before denying RAs, potentially supported by the National Fund. By ensuring veracity of requests, the National Fund can prevent cost avoidance. Following a welfare approach and utilitarian analysis, the Incentive and Cost-Sharing Model promotes inclusion, accessibility, and adherence to a uniform legal standard for RAs, benefiting PwDs and institutions alike.

HEAT STRESS IMPACT

Climate change-induced heat stress significantly impacts worker health and productivity, especially in vulnerable regions.



Recent periods have seen climate change and environmental degradation severely affecting worker safety and health, with heat stress emerging as a major concern. This condition hampers labor efficiency, reduces working hours, and opposes the International Labour Organization's (ILO) aim for fair employment. Heat stress can cause severe health issues like heat stroke, cardiovascular diseases, kidney injury, and even physical injuries, especially among those in heat-exposed jobs. An ILO study from 2019 projected a 2.2% reduction in total working hours globally by 2030, with a loss of USD 2,400 billion in GDP. Sectors like agriculture and construction, particularly in southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, are predicted to suffer the most, with these regions being highly vulnerable due to their large poor populations and the prevalent heat stress. This situation exacerbates poverty, inequality, and food security issues.

The decline in productivity is particularly critical in countries with large agricultural workforces, impacting economic stability and household food security. Indian data highlights that heat stress could result in a 5.8% drop in working hours by 2030, with significant impacts on women workers and sectors requiring physical labor. Recommendations emphasize the need for comprehensive national guidelines, enhanced infrastructure, better occupational health standards, and proactive governmental policies to mitigate these effects and safeguard vulnerable populations. Effective communication between employers and workers, protective measures, and inclusive planning focusing on the most vulnerable groups are essential steps to counter the adverse impacts of rising temperatures on labor and health.

FISCAL STABILITY

“ The FY25 Union Budget emphasizes fiscal stability and inclusive growth through targeted measures addressing employment, agriculture, MSMEs, and housing. ”



focusing on inclusive growth amidst K-shaped economic challenges. The 8.2% GDP growth in FY24, driven by consumption, highlights an uneven economic recovery. The fiscal deficit, at 5.6% of GDP, remains high, necessitating measures to support weaker economic segments. The budget prioritizes agriculture with emphasis on promoting Atmanirbhar Bharat, research, and digital public infrastructure. Additionally, the budget aims to fortify MSMEs' role in manufacturing and employment, crucial for achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Employment generation receives significant attention with schemes offering incentives to employers and fresh workforce entrants, along with internships and skill development programs. Housing sees a substantial allocation with a 37% increase for urban housing under PMAY, despite it being lower compared to rural schemes. The budget promotes domestic manufacturing through the PLI Scheme and tweaks in sectoral duties to enhance local value addition. Financing constraints for MSMEs are addressed, ensuring smoother term loans. Maintaining fiscal discipline, the government has kept the FY25 headline deficit target at 4.9%, allowing for a transition to a 4.6% deficit in FY26. The allocation remains steady, benefiting from reduced debt costs and higher spending.

These measures aim to consolidate India's fiscal position, enhancing investor confidence and supporting job-led growth, essential for long-term economic resilience and stability.

25-07-2024

BUDGET

2024 Review



The editorial critiques the Budget 2024 for its intent but highlights its lack of detailed implementation strategies.

The Budget 2024, presented by the Union Finance Minister, focuses on three primary areas: long-term vision, recognition of unemployment issues, and strategy based on coalition government dynamics. However, it lacks detailed measures for achieving the ambitious goals it sets out. The budget maintains continuity with a slight reduction in the fiscal deficit, aimed at enhancing fiscal consolidation efforts. Significant concerns are raised about the reduction in various expenditure items and the potential impact on employment and economic growth. The budget includes measures to support MSMEs, enhance private consumption, and improve the internship scheme, yet falls short in providing a comprehensive plan for effective implementation. Additionally, notable omissions such as industrial sectors and specific educational and health initiatives are highlighted, which could hinder the overall efficacy of the budget. Thus concludes that while the budget's vision is bold, the absence of detailed execution plans could undermine the potential to realize its targets.

PARIS 2024 OLYMPICS

26-07-2024



The Paris 2024 Olympics, commencing amidst global turmoil, promises intense competition and hope, featuring over 200 nations and diverse sports, including new additions like breakdancing.

The Paris 2024 Olympics, starting this Friday, mark a return to a more typical setting compared to the pandemic-affected Tokyo 2020 Games. Despite the ongoing global issues, such as Russia's ban due to its war activities and Israel's controversial presence, the Olympics continue to embody competitive spirit and unity. Individual Russian athletes will compete neutrally, but the country is barred from team events. The event features a diverse range of countries, from superpowers like the U.S. and China to smaller nations like Fiji, all vying for glory. Athletes participating earn the prestigious title of Olympian, with medal winners gaining further acclaim.

Paris and France face challenges, both economically and logistically, in hosting this major event. Key contenders include the U.S., China, Japan, Great Britain, Australia, Germany, and France. The Games also spotlight individual talent, with stars like Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz representing Spain in tennis. New additions, such as breakdancing, highlight the blend of sport and entertainment. With 204 countries, including India, neutral athletes, and a refugee team, the Olympics offer smaller nations a chance to shine, as seen in Morocco's football victory over Argentina.

The event symbolizes hope and diversion, especially for countries like Afghanistan. Security concerns persist, recalling the tragic 1972 Munich attack. Recent COVID-19 cases among the Australian women's water polo team underscore the ongoing pandemic's impact. As the world watches, the Paris Olympics aim to provide a platform for excellence and unity.

USING CHILDREN'S DATA SECURELY



“ The editorial discusses the secure and lawful handling of children's personal data in India's education system, emphasizing the need for strict data privacy measures. ”

India's education system is one of the largest globally, with extensive data collection to manage it efficiently. The Ministry of Education's UDISE+ platform, launched in 2018, aims to collect and exchange real-time information on various educational metrics to improve educational quality. The National Education Policy 2020 introduced the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) for unique student identification, facilitating academic data consolidation and demographic information collection with voluntary consent.

Despite efforts to enhance schooling through systems like APAAR and UDISE+, there are concerns about data privacy and protection, especially with the absence of specific regulations under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023. The editorial emphasizes the need for consent, secure data usage, and strict adherence to data privacy principles given the sensitivity of children's personal data.

The article highlights the Supreme Court's ruling in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. Union of India (2018) that reinforced the fundamental right to privacy, mandating stringent measures to protect children's data. Current challenges include the integration of third-party systems and the complexity of ensuring data protection and compliance. The lack of clarity in legal liability and grievance redressal mechanisms poses significant issues.

The editorial calls for specific protocols, clear regulations, and a robust framework to ensure the security and privacy of children's data in India's educational ecosystem, emphasizing the importance of these measures in the context of evolving digital and educational trends.

29-07-2024

CRITIQUING COVAXIN STUDY

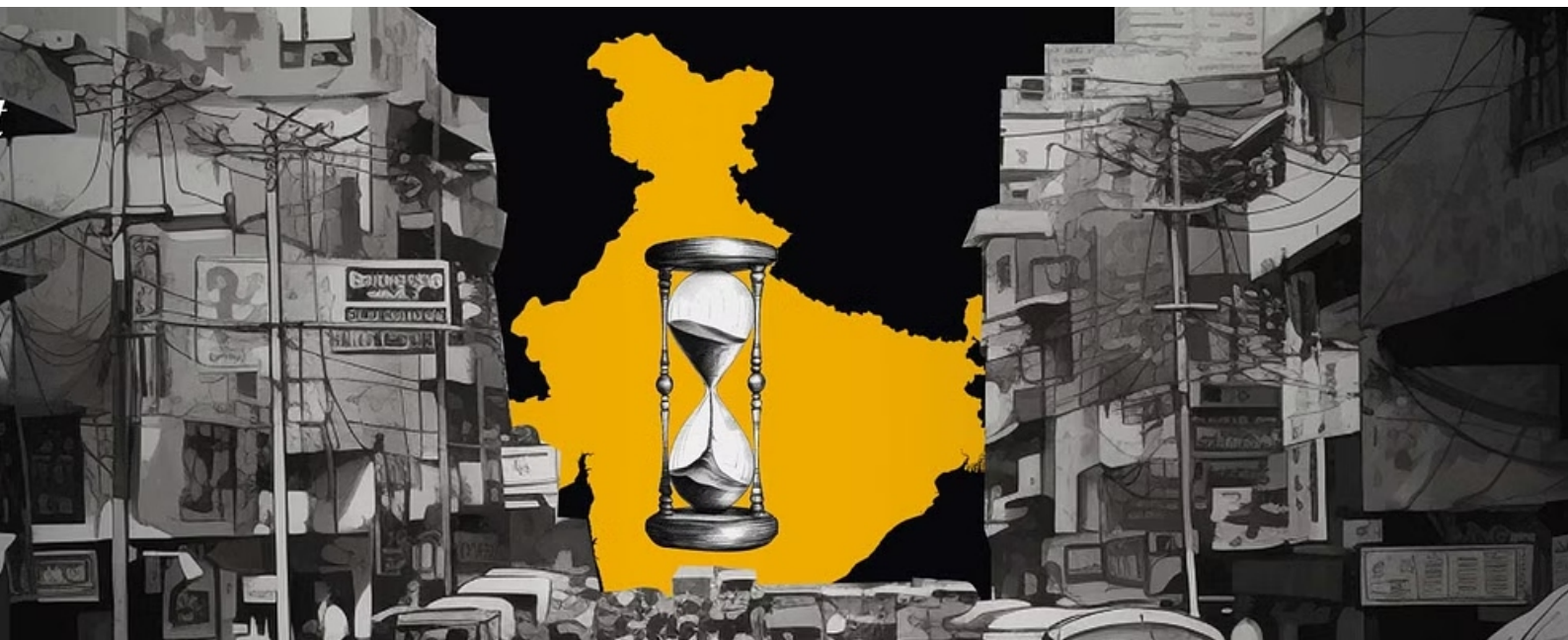
“The editorial critiques the flawed design and publication delays of the Covaxin safety study conducted by BHU and Bharat Biotech.”



The article discusses the significant gaps in the long-term safety study of Covaxin conducted by Banaras Hindu University (BHU), which was criticized by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for its poor design. The study, published in Drug Safety, lacked a control arm and relied on participants' recall of adverse events a year after vaccination, introducing recall bias. This compromised the study's reliability in assessing Covaxin's adverse effects. The importance of including a control arm in vaccine safety studies is highlighted to provide reliable information on adverse effects. The article also points out the glaring publication failure by Bharat Biotech and ICMR in releasing the long-term safety data of Covaxin's phase-3 trial, despite having the data for over two and a half years. The phase-3 trial involved nearly 25,800 participants and was completed in November 2020, but only interim data has been published, leading to concerns over transparency and reliability.

Additionally, the article contrasts the ICMR's response to the Covaxin study with its handling of a similar study on Covishield, suggesting possible bias. The author criticizes ICMR for not demanding retraction of the Covishield study despite similar flaws. The article calls for the timely publication of the phase-3 safety data and urges ICMR and Bharat Biotech to address their publication shortcomings to maintain public trust in vaccine safety evaluations.

CENSUS DELAY CONCERNS



The delayed Census in India poses significant risks to welfare schemes, representation, and accurate data collection.

The postponement of the Census, initially slated for 2020 and now potentially delayed beyond 2024, raises critical concerns. With a significantly reduced budget allocation of 1,309.46 crore for 2024-25 compared to 3,768 crore in 2021-22, the likelihood of conducting the Census soon appears bleak. The delay hampers the implementation of essential welfare schemes and the women's Reservation Act, affecting a significant portion of the population. Preparations for the Census, such as pre-testing questionnaires, training field staff, and logistics planning, have been ongoing for years. However, officials indicate that only minimal refresher training is needed to proceed once a date is set. The article highlights the importance of updating the National Population Register (NPR) and clarifies that NPR data won't be used for the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Constitution (Eighty-fourth Amendment) Act of 2001 mandates no delimitation of constituencies until after the first Census conducted post-2026. The Centre must soon decide on the Census reference date to ensure accurate data collection and representation. There is also a debate on whether to include caste information, as an affidavit filed in 2021 deemed it unfeasible. The Centre's decision on contentious NPR questions and whether to collect caste data will shape the future Census operations.