



THE DESERVING INDIA



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# WEEKLY EDITORIALS 2024

09-09-2024

# PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS



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**The article discusses the declining state of India's public health sector and the factors contributing to it.**”

India's public health system has significantly weakened, leaving citizens without essential healthcare services. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the sector's inadequacies, exposing a policy paralysis in addressing fundamental issues. There is a shortage of staff, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of accountability, which affects the delivery of healthcare services. Public spending on health remains low, resulting in a decline in basic services like immunization and maternal healthcare. The government's reliance on the private sector and insurance-based models has not improved healthcare access for the poor. Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and district hospitals, crucial to public health, are understaffed and under-equipped. Programs like Ayushman Bharat focus on hospitalization but neglect primary care and preventive health services. The article stresses that increasing health expenditure, addressing staffing issues, and strengthening PHCs are crucial to reversing this trend. Public health should be prioritized, ensuring access to affordable, quality care for all, especially the underprivileged. The editorial concludes with the call for a comprehensive strategy that moves beyond hospital-centric care and insurance models, focusing on robust primary and preventive healthcare systems to meet the needs of the population.

10-09-2024



# FUTURE OF CENSUS IN INDIA

“ **India should shift from decennial enumeration-based censuses to dynamic, register-based ones for timely and accurate data.** ”

India's upcoming Census, delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, might take place in 2026 or 2027, a 16-year gap from the last Census in 2011. While concerns arise about outdated data, register-based censuses are proposed as a more dynamic alternative. This approach, already adopted by countries like Austria, Finland, and Sweden, uses government administrative registers to gather data, making it more efficient and cost-effective. India has the potential to implement such a system, integrating existing databases like Aadhaar, PAN, and voter ID. Though the integration of multiple databases is a mammoth task, the benefits, including real-time data updates, outweigh the challenges. Transitioning to this method could save resources, streamline census operations, and improve accuracy. Additionally, small-scale surveys may be used for detailed statistics where needed. This shift would represent a significant leap toward more frequent, continuous censuses, enhancing policy decisions and socioeconomic research.

11-09-2024

# THE THE GST COUNCIL



**“ GST Relief for Insurance The GST Council considers tax relief on life and health insurance premiums amid rising concerns about high levies. ”**

The GST Council, in its second meeting after the 2024 general election, is addressing concerns about the 18% tax on insurance premium payments. A new Group of Ministers is being formed to review and recommend changes in the GST on life and health insurance policies, with a decision expected in November. This is a shift from Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's earlier defense of the levy in Parliament, where it was noted that states benefit significantly from GST revenues. The reconsideration has been requested multiple times since 2017, but previous discussions maintained the status quo.

What's different this time is that some government members have expressed opposition to the high GST on life insurance, calling it unfair. Other political allies have also pushed for reductions in taxes on health and life insurance. The sharp rise in GST collections from health insurance, growing by over 54% between 2021-22 and 2023-24, has fueled the debate. The Council is considering tax relief that would reduce premiums, especially for group policies, senior citizens, or capped insurance covers. The focus is on ensuring these cuts benefit consumers, given the rising cost of healthcare post-pandemic and the challenges families face with inadequate public health systems. There are also suggestions to review helicopter services taxed at 5%, while ensuring that insurance policies receive similar attention.

# BANGLADESH'S POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

“ Bangladesh is facing severe political instability, posing risks both domestically and regionally. ”

Bangladesh is experiencing severe political turbulence, compounded by a shift in governance after massive protests over the 'quota system' and ongoing student demonstrations. Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister, was forced to resign and flee, while an interim government, backed by the army, took over. The interim administration, led by economist Muhammad Yunus, has dismissed key officials. Although some may view Hasina's removal as a democratic victory, it could resemble the 'Prague Spring', with democratic aspirations crushed quickly. The growing influence of Islamist forces has also exacerbated the situation, presenting additional internal threats. Regionally, India's security concerns have intensified due to rising Islamist radicalism in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Bangladesh's pro-India stance, heavily associated with Sheikh Hasina, is in doubt, especially if the country leans towards China or Pakistan. Further instability could also disrupt the Indian northeast, increase radical elements, and endanger economic cooperation. Thus, the country's uncertain future, with impending elections, poses serious risks for India and the broader region.



# BULLDOZER

## JUSTICE CONCERNS

**“ The Supreme Court is addressing concerns over extra-legal demolitions that target marginalized groups, urging the need for due process. ”**

The Supreme Court of India is engaging with stakeholders to create guidelines to address extra-legal demolitions, which have become more frequent, often targeting vulnerable groups without legal recourse. Over the past few years, local authorities have conducted such demolitions arbitrarily, frequently without following due process or providing rehabilitation options, leading to further marginalization and inequality. These actions violate fundamental rights and go against constitutional principles. The Court aims to ensure that future demolitions adhere to legal frameworks that balance enforcement with the protection of human rights. It suggests implementing strict guidelines, including a moratorium on punitive demolitions, providing proper notice, and ensuring affected parties are informed of their legal rights and options. Demolitions should only occur in exceptional cases and after thorough assessment of their necessity. Additionally, the guidelines must prioritize rehabilitation and provide an opportunity for those affected to challenge the decision. The Court stresses the need for municipal accountability, as current practices often infringe on citizens' rights. By reimagining demolition policies, the legal framework should ensure fairness, due process, and prevent unjust actions that disproportionately impact marginalized communities.



14-09-2024



# INFLATION WOES

**“ Inflation in food prices, especially vegetables, is threatening to undermine India's economic stability and momentum, making disinflation challenging for policymakers. ”**

India's retail inflation, as reported by the National Statistical Office, showed an increase in August with headline inflation rising to 3.65% from 3.60% in July. The primary driver was a surge in vegetable prices, which saw a sharp rise of over 380 basis points, pushing food price inflation to 5.66%. Prices of commonly consumed vegetables like potatoes and onions remained in high double digits for over six months, adding pressure to inflation levels. Pulses and cereals also saw persistent double-digit inflation. Rural areas, in particular, saw food inflation rise above 6%, while private consumption is struggling to recover.

Core inflation, which excludes food and fuel, also rose slightly to 3.38%, signaling broader price instability. Manufacturers reported a sharp increase in goods prices, marking the second-fastest inflation in output prices in nearly 11 years, further complicating price stability. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das acknowledged that achieving the final phase of disinflation remains challenging. With high food inflation threatening to impact growth, authorities are focused on preventing inflation from undermining broader economic momentum, even as policymakers continue to face spatial and temporal challenges posed by the monsoon.