

● POLITY

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

ANONYMOUS POLITICAL HOARDINGS NOT ALLOWED: EC

CONTEXT: The Election Commission (EC) has directed all States and Union Territories to ensure that political hoardings clearly disclose the names of publishers and printers, citing the need for traceability, accountability, and adherence to legal provisions under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.



CRACKDOWN ON ANONYMOUS POLITICAL HOARDINGS

1) Disclosure Requirement:

- Election Commission (EC) demands disclosure of publishers' and printers' names for traceability and accountability in political hoardings.
- Essential for regulating campaign financing and ensuring responsibility in case of inappropriate content under Model Code of Conduct or statutory provisions.

2) EC Directive to States and UTs:

- EC directs Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories to ensure clear identification of printers and publishers on printed poll-related material.
- Aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in campaign communications.

3) Reason for Decision:

- Commission's response to representations revealing anonymous hoardings in areas under municipal authorities' control.
- Section 127A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, mandates displaying printer and publisher details on election material.

4) Instructions for Compliance:

- Chief Secretaries instructed to inform municipal authorities about EC's requirements, including past directives from 2004 and

2007.

- Chief Electoral Officers tasked with communicating these instructions to political parties for strict adherence.

CONCLUSION: The EC's crackdown on anonymous political hoardings, mandating disclosure of publishers and printers, aims at transparency and legal compliance, crucial for accountable campaign communications.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PANDORA'S BOX

CONTEXT: The recent revelations regarding electoral bonds, including donations from questionable sources and concerns about money laundering and tax evasion, highlight the need for a comprehensive investigation by regulatory institutions and Parliament to ensure transparency and legality in campaign financing, reflecting broader concerns about the integrity of democratic processes in India.



Pandora's Box: Electoral Bonds Scandal

Scheme Revelations:

- Recent disclosures on electoral bonds reveal concerning details, raising alarms in regulatory and policy circles.
- Investigation uncovers donations from financially troubled companies to political parties, notably favouring the ruling BJP.

Suspect Donations:

- Loss-making firms donated substantial amounts, sparking suspicions of money laundering.
- Profitable firms exceeded donation amounts compared to their profits, raising questions about their motives.
- Some donor firms lacked transparency in reporting net profits or taxes, indicating potential tax evasion.

Rule-breaking and Suspect Sources:

- New firms making donations before the stipulated period,

suggesting irregularities in funding sources.

- Concerns arise about the role of investigating agencies and potential quid pro quo arrangements.

Regulatory Concerns:

- RBI and Election Commission officials previously warned of money laundering and tax evasion risks.
- Despite apprehensions, the Union Finance Ministry proceeded with the controversial scheme.

Implications and Accountability:

- Electoral bonds facilitated significant funds for political parties, notably benefiting the BJP.
- The Supreme Court's intervention highlights the opaque nature of campaign financing, urging post-election scrutiny.
- Calls for thorough investigations into donors and recipients' compliance with laws and ethics, emphasizing transparency and accountability in electoral funding.

Call for Action:

- Parliament and regulatory bodies urged to conduct comprehensive inquiries post-elections.
- Judiciary expected to oversee and prod institutions for a cleanup of campaign and electoral financing for a healthier democracy.

CONCLUSION: The electoral bonds scandal underscores the urgent need for transparent and accountable electoral financing, calling for thorough investigations and regulatory reforms post-elections for a healthier democratic process.

Why a One Health Approach?

- The emergence of pandemics like COVID-19 highlights the interdependence between humans, animals, and the environment.
- Diseases like lumpy skin disease in livestock demonstrate the impact on productivity and trade.
- A coordinated approach is crucial to be better prepared for future outbreaks, including those affecting wildlife.

Mission Goals:

- Develop strategies for integrated disease surveillance, joint outbreak response, and coordinated research and development.
- Ensure seamless information sharing for better control of both routine and pandemic diseases.
- Focus on strong R&D for diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics to combat emerging diseases.

Key Implementation Strategies:

- **National Institute for One Health:** Established in Nagpur to be the national anchor for coordinating activities and international collaboration.
- **Network of Laboratories:** Creation of a national network of high-risk pathogen laboratories for a unified disease outbreak response.
- **Data and Analytics:** Utilizing AI, machine learning, and disease modeling to improve disease surveillance across sectors.
- **Global Cooperation:** Highlighting the One Health approach during India's G-20 presidency for international collaboration.

A Broader Perspective:

- One Health goes beyond disease control, encompassing issues like antimicrobial resistance, food safety, and climate change.
- Successful implementation requires collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, academia, the private sector, and citizens.

Overall Vision:

- The National One Health Mission is a journey towards achieving the goals of "One Earth, One Health" and "Health for All."

CONCLUSION: The National One Health Mission fosters a collaborative approach for a healthier planet and population.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

THE ADVENT OF A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO 'ONE HEALTH'

CONTEXT: The 'National One Health Mission' launched by India's cabinet represents a comprehensive approach involving multiple ministries, scientific agencies, and international coordination to address the interdependence between human health, animal health, and the environment, emphasizing pandemic preparedness, disease surveillance, research and development, and global cooperation in areas such as antimicrobial resistance and climate change impacts.



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA TO SEND NEW DEFENCE ATTACHÉS TO SEVERAL MISSIONS IN AFRICA

CONTEXT: India is sending new defense attachés to various missions around the world, including several African countries for the first time, to strengthen its military diplomacy in a strategically complex world.



Expansion of Military Diplomacy

- India to send defence attachés (DA) to several missions in Africa for the first time, reflecting a broader focus on military diplomacy.
- This move is part of a larger adjustment of DA positions across continents due to dynamic situations in Indo-Pacific, Red Sea-Indian Ocean, and Eurasia.

Focus on Africa

- Four new DA expected to be deployed in Africa, with one in Francophone western Africa and three in eastern and southeastern Africa.
- Indian missions in Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Djibouti are under consideration for new DA placements.

Training and Deployments

- DA posted abroad underwent pre-deployment training at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service.
- Indian embassy in Poland to receive a new DA, while the Indian mission in Warsaw is currently served by the DA in the Czech Republic.

Strategic Adjustments

- Readjustments in DA positions align with India's evolving defence requirements, including defence production, cooperation, and crisis management.
- Recent crises in Gaza and Ukraine underscore the importance of effective DA management in East Europe, Eurasia, and East Africa for safeguarding Indian interests.

Operational Successes

- Indian marine commandos captured 35 Somali pirates, highlighting the need for a ready defence posture in the Red Sea-western Indian Ocean region.
- Similar adjustments expected in Indian missions in the United Kingdom, Russia, Philippines, and Armenia, reflecting rationalization and strategic recalibration.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

AFTER CRUDE OIL, IT'S RUSSIAN DIAMONDS; INDIA RAISES CONCERN OVER SANCTIONS WITH EUROPE

CONTEXT: New EU-G7 sanctions targeting Russian diamonds are causing problems for Indian diamond exporters, who are urging the Indian government to set up a separate screening process.



Indian Diamond Exporter Concerns

- Indian diamond exporters facing losses and delays due to EU-G7 sanctions on Russian diamonds.
- Call for a separate screening process in India to ensure smooth processing of exports to Western countries.

Diplomatic Discussions

- Concerns were raised during the visit of Belgian Foreign Secretary Theodora Gantzis to India.
- Meetings with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal, and joint India-Belgian Foreign Office Consultations held.

Bilateral Cooperation

- Belgium Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledges diamond cooperation as an important aspect of economic relations with India.
- Discussions cover various bilateral cooperation areas, including trade, semiconductors, cyber, digital, and Science and Tech.

EU-G7 Sanctions on Russian Diamonds

- EU-G7 sanctions impact Russian diamonds polished in third countries, affecting Indian diamond market dominance.
- Sanctions aim to deprive Russia of significant revenue from diamond exports, estimated at 4 billion Euros annually.

Global and Regional Affairs

- Dialogue extends to global challenges and regional affairs during diplomatic discussions.
- Indian concerns over diamond processing challenges raised alongside broader bilateral and multilateral cooperation topics.

CONCLUSION: The impact of EU-G7 sanctions on Russian diamonds has spurred Indian diamond exporters to seek a

separate screening process to mitigate losses and delays. Diplomatic discussions with Belgium and broader bilateral cooperation highlight the multifaceted nature of addressing economic challenges within a global and regional context.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Q4 GDP GROWTH MAY THROW A SURPRISE

CONTEXT: Economists anticipate that India's GDP growth for the January-March 2024 quarter will surpass the National Statistical Office's forecast of 5.9%, potentially reaching between 6.5% to 7%, contributing to a positive boost to the government's estimated full-year GDP growth of 7.6% for 2023-24.

Beating the odds

GDP growth in Q4 is expected to be in the range of 6.5%-6.8% despite certain signs of deceleration

- NSO expected growth to slow after the deceleration in petrol consumption, vehicle registrations, and GST collection

- But economists say high frequency indicators released so far point to continuation of momentum seen in Q3



- Real GDP growth had averaged a strong 8.2% in the first three quarters of 2023-24

Expected Q4 GDP Growth

- Analysts project India's GDP growth for January-March 2024 to surpass NSO's forecast of 5.9%, possibly reaching 6.5% to 7%.
- This higher growth would positively impact the official 7.6% growth estimate for the full year 2023-24.

Past Growth Trends

- Real GDP growth averaged 8.2% in the first three quarters of the previous year.
- Despite some deceleration in indicators like vehicle registrations and GST revenues, analysts expect a less steep loss in growth momentum in Q4 compared to NSO's anticipation.

Upside Risk and Potential Growth

- QuantEco Research sees an upside risk to NSO's Q4 GDP growth estimate, potentially contributing to a 20 basis points increase in the full-year GDP growth estimate.
- If overall growth reaches around 7.8% for 2023-24, Q4 GDP growth would be in the range of 6.5%-6.8%.

Optimistic Signals

- Ultra-high frequency indicators suggest a continuation of healthy momentum, despite mild deceleration in Q4 indicators like petroleum consumption, vehicle registrations, and GST revenue collection.
- Analysts predict real GVA and GDP growth to be around 6% and 7% respectively, in Q4, exceeding NSO's estimates.

CONCLUSION: Analysts anticipate robust Q4 GDP growth, potentially surpassing NSO's forecast, with optimistic signals despite mild deceleration.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

WITH EYES ON CHINA, U.S. AND JAPAN VOW NEW SECURITY COLLABORATION

CONTEXT: U.S. President Biden and Japanese PM Kishida pledge enhanced strategic cooperation, condemn China's actions, and announce defense upgrades.



U.S.-Japan Strategic Cooperation

- Biden and Kishida pledge a "new era" of cooperation, focusing on missile co-development and manned moon landings.
- Joint statement condemns China's regional escalation, aiming for a global security partnership for complex challenges.

Defense Commitments

- Biden reaffirms U.S. commitment to defend Japan using full capabilities, including nuclear options.
- Planned upgrade of military command-and-control frameworks for improved interoperability and planning.

Network Upgradation

- Plans include upgrading defense communications networks and networking air defense capabilities with Australia to counter threats.
- Emphasis on enhancing defense capabilities against air and missile threats in the region.

CONCLUSION: The U.S.-Japan alliance strengthens with a focus on defense cooperation, technology development, and addressing regional security challenges, notably concerning China's actions.



ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

ON UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIAN STATES

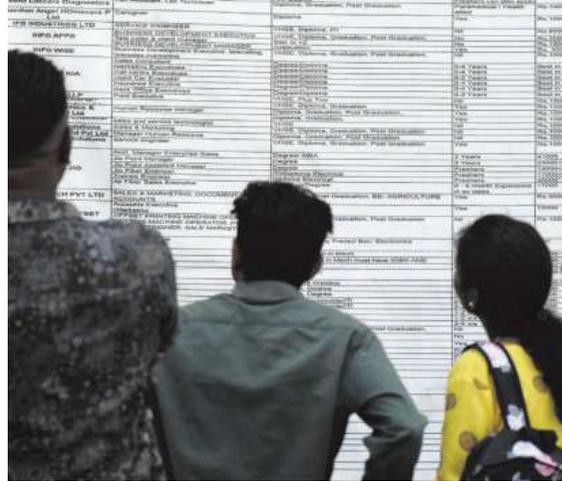
CONTEXT: A recent report released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) revealed that two out of every three unemployed individuals was a young graduate.

THE GIST

- A recent report released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) revealed that two out of every three unemployed individuals was a young graduate.
- Perhaps graduates do not possess the requisite skills required for the growing modern sector. This necessitates a focus on teaching infrastructure and standards.
- Out of the 27 States considered, 12 States have unemployment rates less than the national average.

A definite lack of jobs

This analysis looks at unemployment in the major States of India. Since the coverage of smaller States in the overall sample is less compared to larger States, these estimates should not be taken as definitive measurements but as indicators of the factors driving unemployment



In pursuit: Job seekers attend Aspire 2024 organised by District Employment office and Vocational Higher Secondary Department at SRV Government Vocational Higher Secondary School in Kochi, in 2023. THULASI KAKKAT

FIGURE 1: UNEMPLOYMENT ACROSS INDIAN STATES

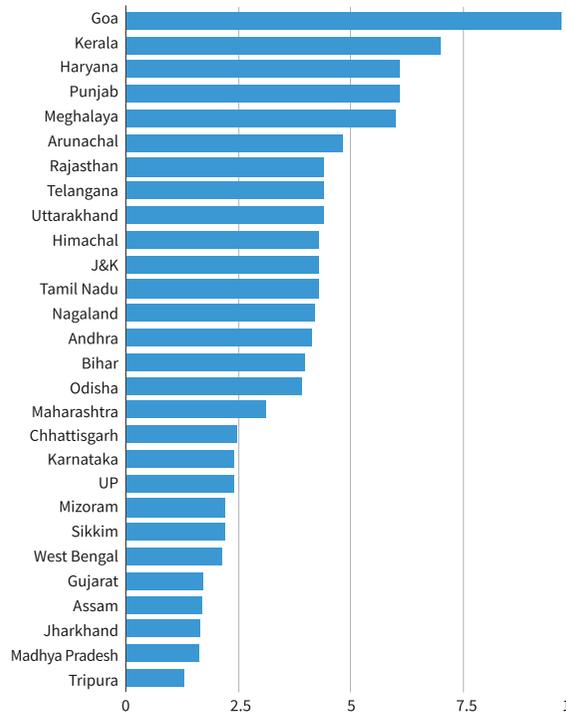


FIGURE 2: SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

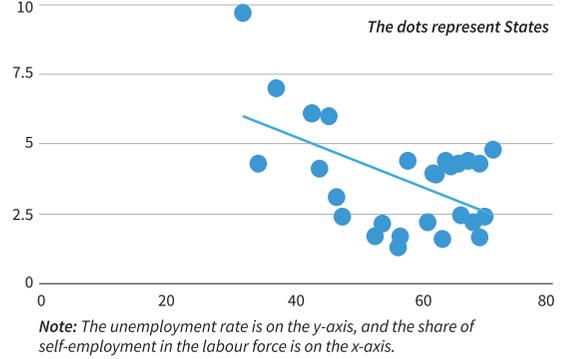


FIGURE 3: URBANISATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

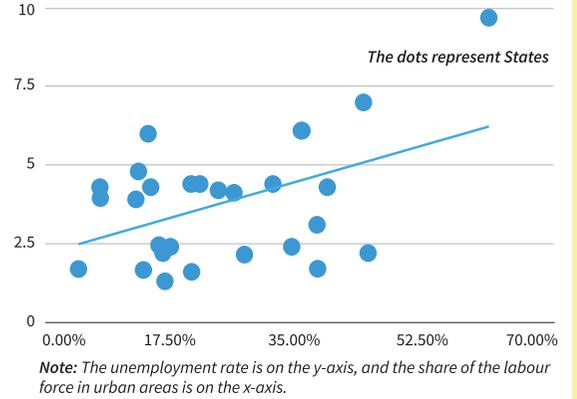
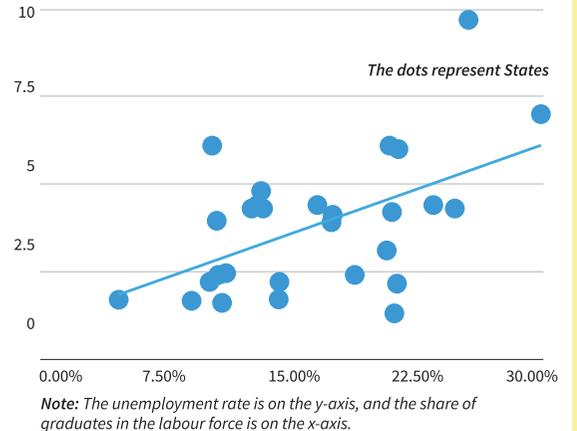


FIGURE 4: SHARE OF GRADUATES AND UNEMPLOYMENT



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INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

UNEMPLOYMENT IN MAJOR INDIAN STATES (EXCLUDING UNION TERRITORIES)

Analysis based on PLFS 2022-23 data for individuals aged 15 and above (UPSS method)

1. Unemployment Rates Across States

- Highest rate: Goa (almost 10%) - more than 3 times the national average (3.17%)
- Interestingly, 4 of the top 5 states with high unemployment are relatively richer (Goa, Kerala, Haryana, Punjab)
- Rich western states (Maharashtra, Gujarat) have lower unemployment rates than the national average
- All northern states (except Jammu & Kashmir) and southern states (except Karnataka) have higher unemployment rates than the national average

2. Determinants of Unemployment

- **Self-employment:** A negative relationship exists between unemployment rates and the share of the labour force in self-employment (Figure 2)
 - More self-employment (mostly informal) leads to lower unemployment as it absorbs job seekers
 - Cause-and-effect unclear: Does lack of self-employment opportunities cause high unemployment, or do people avoid self-employment in high-unemployment states?
- **Urbanization:** A positive relationship exists between unemployment rates and the share of the urban labour force (Figure 3)
 - Highly urbanized states (Goa, Kerala) have high unemployment
 - Less urbanized states (UP, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh) have lower unemployment due to a larger informal job sector (especially in agriculture) acting as a buffer

3. Education and Employment

- A positive relationship exists between the share of graduates in the labour force and unemployment rates (Figure 4)
 - Kerala (highly educated workforce) faces high unemployment
 - Gujarat and Maharashtra (lower share of graduates) have lower unemployment despite being richer and urbanized
- Possible reasons for graduate unemployment:
 - Lack of required skills for the modern sector (highlights the need for focus on education quality)
 - Graduate aspirations for high-wage jobs that may not be readily available in the modern sector

4. Other Factors and Policy Implications

- State policy also plays a key role in unemployment
- This analysis highlights the links between structural transformation (reduced agriculture, increased urbanization and education) and unemployment
- As India develops, these factors will put upward pressure on the unemployment rate
- Policy needs to focus on job generation to counter these tendencies

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMY TAKES FRONT SEAT IN 2024 CAMPAIGN

CONTEXT: The upcoming Lok Sabha election presents a battle of narratives, focusing on economic uncertainties, rising unemployment, and price concerns for voters.

Table 1: Perception on the availability of job opportunities

| Getting jobs have become... | % |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Difficult | 62 |
| Stayed the same | 18 |
| Easier | 12 |

Note: Rest did not respond

Question asked: If you compare today with the past five years, do you think it is much easier to get jobs or has it become more difficult?



“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.” - Robert Frost

Economic Concerns in Indian Politics

1. Job Difficulty and Unemployment:

- Over 60% find it harder to secure jobs, with a significant decrease in work opportunities for women.
- Unemployment transcends rural-urban boundaries, impacting economic sustainability across all areas.

2. Price Rise Impact:

- 71% of respondents note an increase in prices over the past five years, affecting household economic equilibrium.
- Marginalized groups, especially the poor and rural communities, face heightened economic challenges due to rising prices.

3. Social Dimensions of Economic Crisis:

- Unemployment and price rise affect all social groups, with marginalized communities expressing greater concerns.
- Economic issues are interpreted through social identity, highlighting the intertwined nature of economics and society.

4. Government Responsibility and State Intervention:

- Majority believe both Union and State governments are responsible for shrinking job opportunities and price rises.
- Calls for state intervention in economic affairs challenge the notion of a self-regulating liberal economy, emphasizing the need for dignified employment solutions and questioning the concept of a Charitable State

5) Perception of Economic Conditions

1. Improvement vs. Struggle:

- Nearly half perceive their life as better over the past five years,

reflecting a positive perception of overall progress.

- However, over one-third feel their condition has worsened, highlighting persistent challenges.

2. Financial Security:

- Only a little over one in five respondents can save after meeting household needs, indicating financial strain for many.
- One in three can fulfill needs but struggle to save, while others find it difficult to make ends meet.

3. "Acche Din" Perception:

- A minority (16%) believe "good days" have arrived, while a significant portion remains skeptical or sees no improvement.
- Lower economic strata and urban voters are more likely to express dissatisfaction with economic conditions.

6) Impact on Voting Decisions

1. Central Curiosity:

- Lackluster economic perception is a key factor of interest in election discussions, likely influencing voter decisions.
- Understanding how economic sentiments translate into voting behavior is crucial in the campaign and voting phases.

CONCLUSION: The intertwined challenges of job scarcity, price rises, and economic disparities underscore a critical concern in Indian politics. Voter perceptions of economic conditions, from cautious optimism to financial strain, will shape crucial decisions in the upcoming elections, reflecting the intricate link between economic realities and electoral choices.



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