



## ● POLITY

## ● ECONOMICS

## ● TECHNOLOGY

## ● ECOLOGY

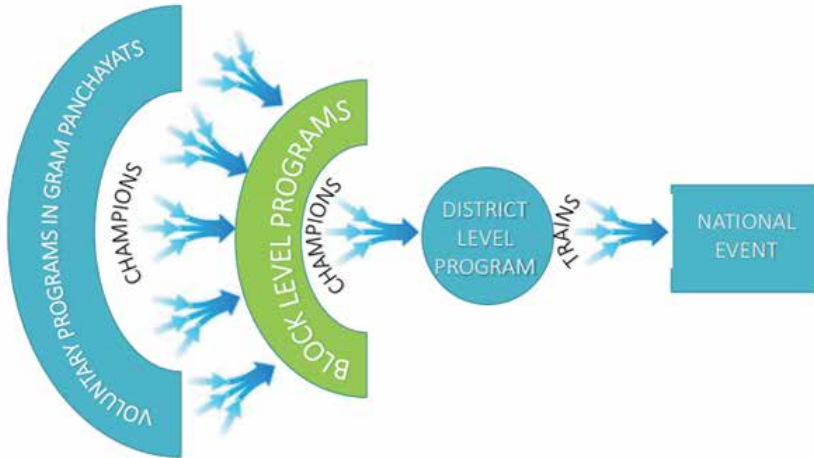
## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## GOVT. LAUNCHES MERI MAATI, MERA DESH CAMPAIGN

## GIST

Soil brought from all parts of the country will be used to develop a unique garden called Amrit Vatika along the Kartavya Path in Delhi; tributes will be paid to martyrs and freedom fighters

The Union government has launched the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign, envisaged as a culminating event of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebration of 75 years of Indian Independence, in which soil collected from different parts of the country in August will be used to develop a garden along the Kartavya Path in Delhi.



Events have been planned at the panchayat, village, block, urban local body, and State and national levels, respectively. The panchayat-level programmes will be organised between August 9 and 15.

The five-point agenda includes the installation of a shilaphalakam (memorial plaque), as per specifications, bearing the "names of those who have made the supreme sacrifice".

"For this purpose, veers (bravehearts) include freedom fighters, defence personnel, personnel of the Central Armed

Police Forces (CAPF), and State Police, who laid down their lives in the line of duty," a senior government official said.

A solemn pledge will be taken by people at the memorial site, affirming their commitment to the country.

Work for the shilaphalakam may be executed through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), leveraging local materials and resources.

'Vasudha Vandhan' envisages every gram panchayat or village renewing "Mother Earth by planting 75 saplings of indigenous species and developing an Amrit Vatika".

'Veeron Ka Vandan' will felicitate freedom fighters, and the families of deceased freedom fighters. "Retired Defence, CAPF, and State Police personnel, and the families of those from these forces who lost their lives in the line of duty, may be honoured," the official said.

The National Flag will be hoisted and the National Anthem sung.

**Mitti Kalash**

Young volunteers and others will collect soil from every panchayat/village and bring it to the block, from where the 'Mitti Kalash' will be transported to Delhi.

**Amrit Vatika**

The collected Mitti-Kalash will be transported to Kartavya Path...The mitti (soil) from all parts of the country will be utilised to develop a unique garden, called the Amrit Vatika, with the planting of indigenous species. An 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' memorial, dedicated to all the heroes who have contributed to the freedom, unity and integrity of the country, will be erected," the official said.

In urban areas, events will be organised at local bodies, notified area councils, Cantonment Boards, and town panchayats from August 9 and 15, and in bigger municipalities and municipal corporations from August 16 to 20.

## BILL LIKELY TO MAKE AADHAAR AUTHENTICATION MANDATORY TO REGISTER BIRTHS AND DEATHS

A Bill to amend the Registration of Birth and Death Act, which is among the 21 new Bills listed to be introduced in the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament, is likely to make Aadhaar compulsory for registration of births and deaths for whoever has one.

The Centre allowed the Registrar-General of India (RGI) to perform Aadhaar authentication during registration of births and deaths in the country. Currently, Aadhaar is not mandatory for such registration. The proposed amendment to the 1969 Act will give it legal teeth.

The Bill also requires the States to compulsorily share data on registered births and deaths with the RGI, which functions under the Union Home Ministry. The RGI will maintain its own register of births and deaths. The States are currently required to only send annual statistical reports to the RGI.

**Mou with States**

A senior government official said almost all States have consented to the proposed amendments. As per the requirements of the amendment, the States will have to sign a memorandum of understanding with the RGI to share the Application Programming

Interface (API) from where the data can be pulled out.

While all States are required to use the Civil Registration System (CRS) operated by the RGI to issue birth and death certificates, there are some States which have their own applications.

### NPR database

The database will be used to update the National Population Register (NPR), the Bill proposes.

NPR is the first step towards the creation of a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) or NRC.

If the amendments are implemented, the Centre could use the data to update the NPR that was first prepared in 2010 and revised through door-to-door enumeration in 2015. NPR already has a database of 119 crore residents. The real-time

update of the data on births and deaths will eliminate the requirement of such enumeration to a large extent.

The database will also be used to update the electoral register, Aadhaar, ration card, passport and driving licence databases.

The official said Census besides being a headcount exercise also contains more granular details on socio-cultural indicators and is conducted every 10 years, an aberration being the 2021 Census which has been suspended indefinitely post-COVID-19, but updating the population register will give a clear picture of population figures in real time.

The Bill also requires States to share data on registered births and deaths with RGI

## WHAT DOES INDIA'S FIRST GIG WORKERS' RIGHTS BILL STIPULATE?

### THE GIST

- On July 24, the Rajasthan government passed the Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023.
- The Bill proposes a Welfare Board comprising State officials, five representatives each from gig workers and aggregators, and two others from civil society.
- An aggregator's duties under the Bill include: depositing welfare cess on time, updating the database of gig workers, and documenting any variations in numbers within one month of such changes.

### Background

On July 24, the Rajasthan government passed the Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023. It is the first legislation of its kind in India outlining welfare schemes for the State's approximately three lakh gig workers.

### What did the Bill propose?

The Bill applies to "aggregators" (digital intermediaries connecting buyers and sellers) and "primary employers" (individual or organisations engaging platform-based workers).

The Bill proposes a Welfare Board comprising State officials, five representatives each from gig workers and aggregators, and two others from civil society.

The Board will "set up a welfare fund, register platform-based gig workers, aggregators and primary employers... facilitate guarantee of social security to platform-based gig workers and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

The Board will maintain a database of companies and workers and each worker will receive a unique ID which "shall be valid in perpetuity."

### What is the gig economy?

A gig economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. The term "gig" is a slang word for a job that lasts a specified period of time. Traditionally, the term was used by musicians to define a performance engagement.

### What is gig work?

Independent workers are able to select freelance jobs that they are interested in, that provide new opportunities, and that look right for their preferences and schedule.

They don't get stuck in a full-time job that doesn't interest them or have the flexibility they need.

This sort of freelance economy also lets workers choose when they want to work and helps them avoid being locked in to or dependent on a single employer.

Example : Zomato Food Delivery agent

### Where will the funds come from?

According to the Bill, the Board will create a "Social Security and Welfare Fund" comprising contributions made by individual workers, State government aids, other sources and a 'welfare cess' — a cut from each transaction — which the aggregator is required to pay.

The rate of the welfare cess will not exceed 2% nor fall short of 1% of the value of "each transaction," and aggregators are required to submit the amount within the first five days of a month.

### Are workers' rights recognised?

Under existing labour laws, gig workers who are named 'partners' by platforms are not 'employees' because theirs is not a "fixed term of employment" — marked by providing exclusive service to one provider for a specified duration. The Code on Social Security, passed in 2020 and yet to be implemented, carried "restrictive criteria" about eligibility which are done away with in the Rajasthan Bill, says Chiara Furtado, a tech and labour researcher with the Centre for Internet and Society. The Bill states any person has the right to be registered the minute they join an app-based platform, regardless of the duration of work or how many providers they work for.

The Welfare Board is expected to formulate schemes "for social security," listing only accidental insurance and health insurance, and "other benefits concerning health, accident and education as may be prescribed." Unions have recommended that benefits available to gig workers be enumerated clearly in the Bill,

expanding on the clause “other benefits.” Another responsibility of the Welfare Board, unions say, should be to assist workers in negotiating contracts by developing standard formats and principles for aggregators.

### What about workers’ grievances?

Gig workers “have an opportunity to be heard for any grievances” with “entitlements, payments and benefits provided under the Act.” Per Section 15, a worker can file a petition physically before an officer or online through the web portal. The employer can object to the order within 90 days before an ‘Appellate Authority’. Several reports have documented ineffective

and unresponsive redressal mechanisms. Urban Company workers are currently protesting the “arbitrary” blocking of their accounts and a lack of support.

### Are aggregators held accountable?

An aggregator’s duties under the Bill include: depositing welfare cess on time, updating the database of gig workers, and documenting any variations in numbers within one month of such changes. If they fail to comply, they will be fined up to ₹5 lakh for the first offence and ₹50 lakh for further violations; primary employers will pay up to ₹10,000 for the first offence and ₹2 lakh for subsequent violations.

## SLOW DOCUMENTATION OF ANTIQUITIES

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture noted in its report submitted in the Rajya Sabha on Monday that the **National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA)** could document only 16.8 lakh antiquities out of a total of 58 lakh which is just about 30%.
- It says that the Committee was informed by Director General of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) that the figure of 58 lakh antiquities is only an estimate and there may well be many more.
- The documentation of antiquities is critical in proving ownership and reclaiming stolen heritage items. The government is proactive on securing the repatriation of stolen Indian artefacts from abroad.
- The **NMMA was launched in 2007 to document the**

**country’s monuments and antiquities.** This will help in the creation of a database of all antiquities and can be referred to readily in case of fraudulent dealings or theft. It was initially set up for a period of five years from 2007. It was extended for a further five years till 2017 and later merged with the ASI.

- Indian heritage items and cultural repositories all over the country come under the purview of various agencies. Some are protected by the ASI, some are under the State government and some are under trusts, local authorities and private ownership.
- Therefore, the documentation of all such antiquities in the form of digitised records along with maintenance and periodic auditing of inventory is the first step to ensure the safeguarding of India’s tangible cultural heritage.

## FIRST-EVER GOODS TRAIN CARRYING ESSENTIALS REACH MANIPUR

- In a first, North East Frontier Railway’s mixed freight train carrying essential commodities (potato, rice, sugar, onion and other food products) reached Khongsang station in Manipur.
- Khongsang station was commissioned in 2022 under the Jiribam-Imphal new line project. However, the line was suspended after the violence-hit the northeastern state on May 3.
- It may be recalled the North East Frontier (NF) Railway had extended the first direct passenger train service namely ‘Jan Shatabdi Express’ connecting Tripura’s Agartala & Khongsang covering a stretch of about 55km as part of the ongoing 111km Imphal-Jiribam railway line project which is one of the crucial connectivity projects for the northeastern region.

- Once completed, the line will connect to Manipur state capital Imphal with the country’s broad gauge railway network.
- The project is expected to provide enhanced connectivity to the people of Manipur, help grow small-scale industries in the area and boost tourism in the state.
- After completion, the present road journey time of about 10 hrs to reach Imphal from Jiribam, the state’s first railhead, is expected to be reduced to 2.5 hours.
- Manipur, being a landlocked State and frequent landslides disrupting supply of essential commodities on road, the operation of train would definitely bring a positive change and put the State on track for development.

## NO AWARDS WITHOUT UNDERTAKING FROM CANDIDATES: PANEL

**CONTEXT:** A panel of experts chaired by former Supreme Court judge K.T. Thomas suggested that no awards should be given to candidates without their written undertaking that they will not use the award for any commercial purpose.

The panel’s recommendations come in the wake of a number of high-profile cases in which awards have been given to

candidates who have later been found to have plagiarized their work or to have made false claims about their qualifications. The panel said that the written undertaking would help to ensure that awards are only given to candidates who are worthy of them. It also said that the undertaking would help to protect the reputation of the awards and the organizations that give them.

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## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### ISRAEL'S KNESSET GIVES FIRST NOD TO CONTROVERSIAL JUDICIAL REFORM BILL

- Israel's parliament (Knesset) has given initial approval to a bill that limits some Supreme Court power.
- Commanding 64 of the Knesset's 120 seats, Netanyahu's coalition on Monday won the first of three required votes for the new bill to be written into law.
- The bill seeks a curb on the Supreme Court's power to void decisions made by the government, ministers and elected officials by ruling them unreasonable. It now returns to committee for discussion and could be altered before being brought for the final votes.
- The drive to change the justice system by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has sparked unprecedented protests, stirred concern for Israel's democratic health among its Western allies and bruised the economy.
- Critics argue that this judicial oversight helps prevent corruption and abuses of power. Proponents say the change will facilitate effective governance by curbing court intervention.

## ECOLOGY

### HC DIRECTS TO NOTIFY MHADEI SANCTUARY AS A TIGER RESERVE

- The Goa bench of the Bombay High Court on Monday directed the state government to notify Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and its surrounding areas as a tiger reserve under Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and issue the notification within three months.
- The court also directed the state to determine and settle the rights and claims of Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers, following the law "as expeditiously as possible and preferably within 12 months from today", and take emergent steps to ensure that there are no encroachments in protected forest areas.
- The Goa government had earlier refused the possibility of declaring Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve, and the State Wildlife Board had resolved against the reserve.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has on several occasions in the past, most recently in 2020, recommended setting up of a tiger sanctuary in Goa at the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The recommendation was made in the wake of the death of four tigers, a tigress and three adolescent cubs in 2019 in the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Spread over 208 sq km, Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the northeastern part of the state adjoining Karnataka.
- The NTCA has been constituted under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The authority consists of the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Chairperson), the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Vice-Chairperson), three members of Parliament, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and other members.

## ECONOMICS

### GOVT. APPROVES 8.15% INTEREST RATE FOR PF DEPOSITS IN 2022-23

CONTEXT: The Government approved an interest rate of 8.15% for Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) deposits for the financial year 2022-23 recommended by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

The EPFO's Central Board of Trustees, chaired by the Union Minister of Labour and Employment fix the interest rate based on the performance of the National Pension System (NPS) benchmark index.

NPS BENCHMARK INDEX: The National Pension System (NPS) benchmark index is a set of indices used to measure the performance of NPS funds updated on a monthly basis. The indices are used to measure the performance of NPS funds over different time periods. For example, the 1-year return of an NPS fund is calculated by comparing the value of the fund's assets at the end of one year to the value of the assets at the beginning of

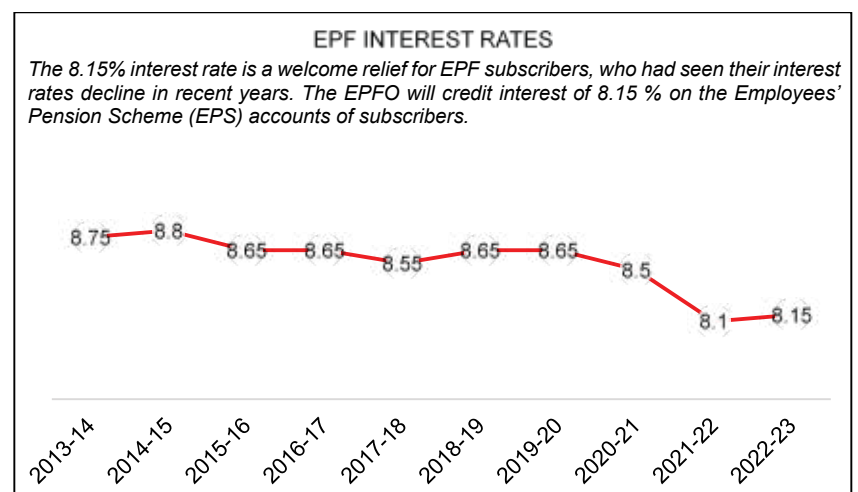


Figure: Line chart representation of the EPF interest rates.

the year. The indices are divided into four asset classes: equity, corporate bonds, government bonds, and alternative assets. The equity benchmark index is the Nifty 50. The corporate bond benchmark index is the CRISIL Corporate Bond Index. The

government bond benchmark index is the RBI 10-Year G-Sec Index. The alternative assets benchmark index is the S&P BSE SENSEX Infrastructure Index.

## IS THERE A RURAL BIAS IN NATIONAL SURVEYS?

Shamika Ravi and Bibek Debroy argue that outdated survey methodology used by national surveys such as the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) systematically underestimated India's development, failing to capture the dynamicity of the Indian economy. On the other hand, P. C. Mohanan and Amitabh Kundu reasoned no systematic underestimation of development by these national surveys and hence no need for restructuring and overhauling the survey methodology.

overestimated rural population. The NFHS-1 and NFHS-4 estimates seem to be really close to World Bank estimates and projections based on Census data.

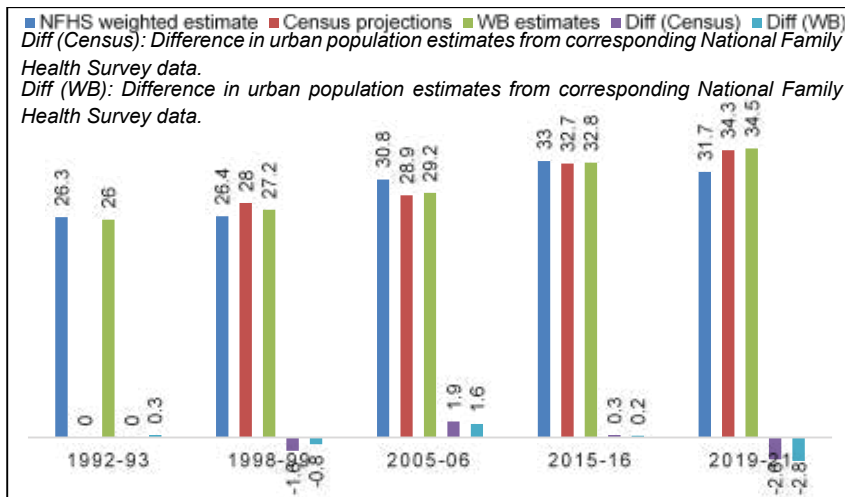


Figure: Bar chart representation of the urban population estimates.

The urban population estimates of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and World Bank matches with the urban percentage projections from the Census figures of 1991, 2001 and 2011. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 3 underestimated rural population, while National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2 and National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5

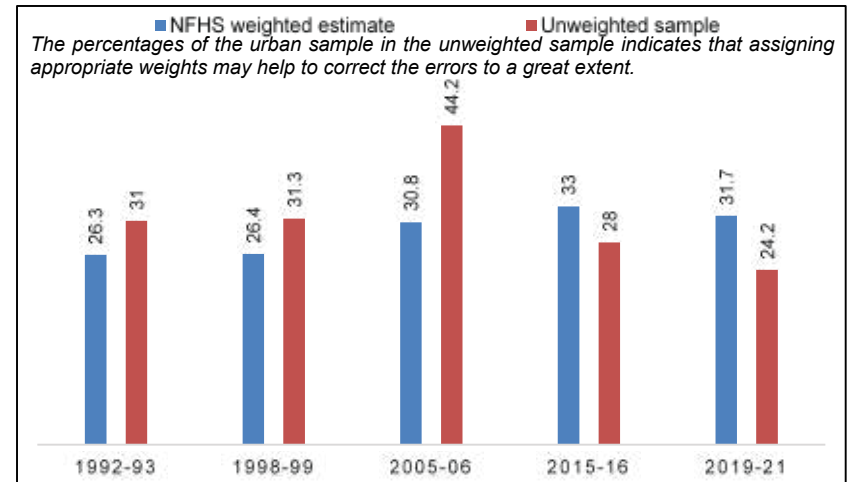


Figure: Bar chart representation of the NFHS weighted estimate and unweighted sample.

Generally, there are higher percentages of no-response in urban areas compared to rural areas. The NFHS-1 with its near correct estimation of urban population had the lowest urban response rate at 94.5%, while NFHS-5 with its underestimation of urban population had the second lowest urban response rate of 95.6 % does not seem to have any systematic relation with either rural or urban bias in estimation.

The Government of India recently appointed a panel under the chairmanship of Dr. Pronab Sen to review the methodology of the National Statistical Organisation. The Pronab Sen Committee needs to address these concerns to make the sample adequately representative rather than go for a complete overhaul of the survey methodology.

## HC DIRECTS TO NOTIFY MHADEI SANCTUARY AS A TIGER RESERVE

**CONTEXT:** HCOB's flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the euro area dropped to an eight-month low of 48.9 in July from 49.9 in June.

The business activity within the Euro Zone shrank much more than expected in July as demand in the bloc's dominant

services industry declined while factory output fell at the fastest pace since COVID-19 first took hold. The decline was broad-based with the euro zone's two biggest economies — Germany and France — both in contractionary territory.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## ISRO TO LAUNCH PSLV-C56 CARRYING SINGAPORE'S DS-SAR AND SIX OTHER SATELLITES

**NEWS IN GIST:** ISRO announced the launch of PSLV-C56 on July 30, carrying Singapore's DS-SAR satellite and six co-passengers. The PSLV-C56 will be in core-alone mode, deploying DS-SAR into a Near-equatorial Orbit at 535 km altitude and 5 degrees inclination. The satellite, developed through a Singaporean partnership, aims to support various applications.

**ABOUT MISSION:** ISRO announced the upcoming launch of PSLV-C56 on July 30, carrying Singapore's DS-SAR satellite equipped with a Synthetic Aperture Radar developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). DS-SAR will provide all-weather day and night coverage with 1m resolution at full polarimetry. New Space India Limited (NSIL) procured PSLV-C56 for deployment.

The mission will also carry six co-passengers, including technology demonstration microsattellites, experimental satellites, and Nano satellites developed under international collaborations, aiming to enable various advanced applications and services in space.

#### OTHER PAYLOADS ON THE MISSION:

- VELOX-AM, a technology demonstration microsattellite,
- Atmospheric Coupling and Dynamics Explorer (ARCADE), an experimental satellite,
- SCOOB-II, a 3U nanosatellite flying a technology demonstrator payload,
- NuLloN by NuSpace, an advanced 3U nanosatellite enabling seamless IoT connectivity in both urban & remote locations,
- Galassia-2, a 3U nanosatellite that will be orbiting at low earth orbit, and
- ORB-12 STRIDER, a satellite developed under an International collaboration

#### Commercialization of the Indian Space Program:

- **Satellite Launch Services:** ISRO offers commercial satellite launch services to other countries and private companies.
- **Earth Observation Data:** Commercial utilization of ISRO's Earth observation satellites for various applications.
- **Navigation Services:** India's regional navigation system (NavIC) used for commercial location-based services.

## SEMICONDUCTOR TECH: WHAT EXACTLY IS INDIA GOING TO MANUFACTURE?

**NEWS IN GIST:** India aims to seize semiconductor opportunities, desiring access to underlying technologies and boosting highly skilled job prospects. However, Foxconn's withdrawal from its joint venture with Vedanta for a semiconductor plant in Gujarat is a significant setback. Vedanta claims to have acquired relevant technologies from another major company for various nodes after the withdrawal. Government incentives await their test in catalyzing the sector's growth.

#### SEMICONDUCTOR CHIP:

A semiconductor chip comprises transistors made from silicon, encoding and manipulating information using electrical currents controlled by the gate.

Transistors have three parts: source, gate, and drain. Manipulating the gate stores and processes data in the chip.

Semiconductors store information as bits with two logical states represented by voltage levels, enabling data processing.

The chip's metal layers form complex electrical connections with transistors, allowing selective access and versatile task execution.

India faces setbacks in semiconductor development as Foxconn withdraws support, while Vedanta seeks technological acquisitions after the joint venture's dissolution.

#### What does the node number mean?

Semiconductor nodes are historically named based on gate length and metal pitch, but miniaturization led to discrepancies. Today's node names lack direct relation to physical dimensions, becoming a marketing indicator of improvement.

**Space Technology Transfer:** ISRO promotes space technology transfer to industries and startups for innovative applications.

- **Joint Ventures and Partnerships:** Collaborations with private companies and foreign agencies for satellite technologies and missions.

#### NewSpace India Limited" (NSIL)

**Establishment:** NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) was incorporated in 2019 as a wholly-owned government company under the administrative control of the Department of Space (DoS).

**Objective:** NSIL's primary objective is to promote and commercially exploit space products, services, and technologies developed by ISRO and other Indian space entities.

**Commercial Launch Services:** NSIL is responsible for facilitating the commercial launch of satellites using ISRO's launch vehicles, like the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV).

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** NSIL plays a crucial role in establishing partnerships and collaborations with foreign space agencies and private companies for satellite launches and other space-related ventures.

**Space Technology Transfer:** NSIL facilitates the transfer of space technologies developed by ISRO to industries and startups for commercial applications and innovations.

Transistor density on chips has exponentially increased over the years, boosting computing power. Smaller transistors improved speed, but reducing metal wire size posed challenges in data transport.

Companies use "nm" in node names differently, leading to inconsistent meaning. Node numbers indicate improvements over predecessors but no longer directly represent physical parameters.

#### Significance to Indian Economy

The semiconductor industry plays a vital role in India's economy, driving innovation and creating job opportunities in high-tech sectors. It contributes significantly to GDP and export revenues.

India's growing demand for electronics and communication technologies boosts the semiconductor market. Domestic production reduces import dependence, enhancing self-reliance and fostering economic growth.

Investment in semiconductor manufacturing bolsters India's position in the global supply chain, attracting foreign investment and technology transfers. It spurs research and development initiatives, fostering a knowledge-based economy.

A robust semiconductor ecosystem nurtures skilled talent, fueling a knowledge-driven workforce. This strengthens India's competitiveness, supporting advancements in artificial intelligence, internet of things, and other emerging technologies.

Government incentives and policies promoting the semiconductor industry drive technology localization and

enhance competitiveness. Collaborations with global players foster knowledge exchange, propelling India towards becoming a

semiconductor manufacturing hub.

## CHEMISTRY BREAKTHROUGH MAKES FLUOROchemicalS PRODUCTION SAFER

**NEWS IN GIST:** University of Oxford scientists have discovered a safer and energy-efficient method to obtain fluorine atoms, crucial for manufacturing vital chemical compounds in industry and research. The breakthrough is praised by the scientific community and is expected to revolutionize compound synthesis.

### ELEMENT FLUORINE:

- Fluorine is a chemical element with the symbol "F" and atomic number 9. It is the lightest halogen and exists as a pale yellow gas at room temperature.
- It is the most electronegative element, meaning it has a strong attraction for electrons, making it highly reactive and capable of forming compounds with various other elements.
- Fluorine plays a crucial role in the manufacturing of a wide range of important chemical compounds, including fluorocarbons, fluorides, and fluorine-based pharmaceuticals.
- It is widely used in various industries, such as the production of refrigerants, plastics, and high-performance materials, as well as in the synthesis of fluorine-containing chemicals for research and industrial applications.

### APPLICATION OF FLUOROchemicalS

Fluorocarbons, a type of fluorine-containing chemical, are widely used as refrigerants in air conditioning and refrigeration systems. They have high thermodynamic efficiency and low environmental impact.

Another essential application of fluorocarbons is in the production of non-stick coatings, such as Teflon, used in cookware, industrial equipment, and textiles.

Fluorocarbon-based foams, like polyurethane foams, are utilized as insulation materials in buildings and appliances due to their excellent thermal properties.

Fluorocarbons find use as propellants in aerosol products like sprays and inhalers, offering controlled release and improved product performance.

In the pharmaceutical industry, fluorine-containing compounds are employed to enhance drug stability, improve pharmacokinetics, and optimize biological activity in various medications. This fluorine modification is critical in drug development and design.

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