

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

E-COURTS TO OFFER NATIONAL LINK

CONTEXT: Chief Justice of India plans to expand Supreme Court with 27 courts, 51 judges' chambers, emphasizing modernization for accessibility.

BACKGROUND: Chief Justice of India unveils plan for Supreme Court expansion: 27 courts, 51 judges' chambers. Current setup includes 17 courtrooms, 2 registrar courts. Chief Justice highlights infrastructure overhaul priority for enhanced accessibility and inclusivity, modernizing judicial facilities, detailed during Independence Day speech.

E-COURTS MISSION MODE PROJECT

The e-Courts Project, based on the 2005 ICT policy, aims to digitally transform Indian judiciary. The e-Committee under the Chief Justice of India advises on computerization, while the Mission Mode Project, overseen by the Department of Justice, aims to ICT-enable district courts nationwide.

- **Digital Transformation:** The e-courts project aims to digitize judicial processes, enhancing efficiency and accessibility in Indian courts.
- **Online Case Management:** It enables electronic filing of cases, online case tracking, and digital records management for quicker and smoother proceedings.
- **Nationwide Network:** The project connects district and higher courts across India, promoting uniformity in technology adoption and case management.
- **Virtual Hearings:** E-courts facilitate virtual hearings, reducing geographical barriers and enabling remote participation for litigants, lawyers, and judges.
- **Transparency and Speed:** The initiative enhances transparency by providing public access to case information, while automation accelerates case disposition and reduces paperwork.

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ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

DEEMED FOREST

CONTEXT: Odisha ends "deemed forests," requires land diversion align with amended Forest Act, raising deforestation concerns and conflicting with Environment Ministry's stance.

BACKGROUND: The Odisha government instructs alignment of forest land diversion with amended Forest Act, eliminating "deemed forests," causing concerns about increased deforestation. This move contradicts the Environment Ministry's promise to safeguard "deemed forests," sparking a potential conflict over legal interpretation and conservation efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS: Amendments to Forest Conservation Act remove ambiguities, allowing states to define forest land. Non-notified land loses protection, potentially accelerating forest diversion. Odisha's past 'deemed forest' identification now faces reduced safeguards, raising concerns over increased land diversion and potential impact on forest conservation.

What was Deemed Forest?

- "Deemed forests" lack clear legal definition, including in Forest Conservation Act of 1980.
- Supreme Court's T N Godavarman Thirumalpad case broadened forest definition, encompassing designated areas.
- Dictionary meaning applies: "forest" covers recognized, reserved, or protected areas per Forest Conservation Act.
- "Forest land" in Section 2 includes government-recorded forest, regardless of ownership or classification.
- Forest Conservation Act provisions apply to all understood forests, irrespective of ownership or classification, per Supreme Court.



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"Doing nothing is very hard to do. You never know when you're finished."—Leslie Nielsen



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S EMPTY GESTURES

THE GIST:

In a general amnesty announced on military television last week, Myanmar's military junta removed six years from the jail term of Aung San Suu Kyi. But we shouldn't be persuaded that the junta has changed its stripes. It regularly uses mass amnesties in attempts to cultivate goodwill, either at home or abroad.

Context : The junta's leader reportedly told the National Defence and Security Council that elections couldn't be conducted due to continued fighting in several regions. The reality for the generals in their fortified compounds is that any poll could further embarrass them — they cannot even reliably rig the national vote.

- Myanmar's military junta removed six years from the jail term of Aung San Suu Kyi, the 78-year-old leader of the government removed by a coup.
- The junta also lopped four years off former president Win Myint's sentence, and reportedly released more than 7,000 other prisoners.
- The day before the amnesty, the junta extended its state of emergency for a fourth time, further delaying elections, due to relentless opposition to its February 2021 coup. The coup sparked ongoing and widespread violence, and shredded the military's last claims to social esteem.
- This has left Myanmar impoverished, largely friendless, and without any plan for a positive future.

Blink Future

- Abandoning the proposed elections, followed by last week's amnesty, is hardly a surprise.
- It broke the faith of the Myanmar people, it constantly tests the patience of foreign governments, even those that offer some sympathy for its self-sabotage.
- With Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior members of the democratically elected government still locked up, the reality facing the generals is they will never beat her at any election.
- No obvious path to fuller inclusion in ASEAN while the generals unleash such violence against their own people.
- The extension of the state of emergency has led to continued crisis in the state
- A pointless reduction in the jail sentences for Myanmar's elected leaders is unlikely to quell the fires of opposition now burning across the country.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

WHY IS THE CAUVERY WATER SHARING ISSUE FLARING UP AGAIN?

THE GIST:

On August 14, the Tamil Nadu government sought the Supreme Court's intervention to make Karnataka immediately release 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoirs and ensure the availability of the specified quantity of water at Biligundlu on the inter-State border for the remainder of the month.

It also urged the Court to direct Karnataka to ensure the release of 36.76 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) stipulated for September 2023 as per the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)'s final award of February 2007 that was modified by the SC in 2018.

Water Sharing

- Karnataka is to make available to Tamil Nadu at Biligundlu a total quantity of 177.25 TMC in a "normal" water year (June to May).
- Of this quantity, 123.14 TMC is to be given during the period from June to September, also marking the season of the southwest monsoon. Invariably, it is during this period that the Cauvery issue gets flared up, when the monsoon yields lower rainfall than anticipated.

What does Karnataka say?

- Karnataka has contended that lower rainfall in the Cauvery catchment including in Kerala has led to the poor inflow to its own reservoirs.
- According to data of the Meteorological Department, Kodagu, the district cited by Mr. Siddaramaiah for the deficit rainfall (the Cauvery originates from there), received 44% less rainfall during June 1-August 15 than what it was expected to experience.
- Also, Karnataka, at the Authority's meeting, had refused to accept the demand of Tamil Nadu for following a distress-sharing formula, even though its Chief Minister, in Mysuru, favoured the idea of sharing distress.

What next?

- Farmers in the Cauvery delta of Tamilnadu, are eagerly awaiting to see whether Karnataka will go at least by the decision of the Authority.
- The present storage of the Mettur reservoir in Tamil Nadu is precariously low with about 20 TMC, which will last only 10 days after giving allowance for dead storage and drinking water requirements, even though water will be required at least for one more month for the standing short-term crop, kuruva.
- A distress-sharing formula, acceptable to all, seems to be the need of the hour

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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

INFLATION SURGE

The latest National Statistical Office (NSO) data showed retail inflation accelerating to a 15-month high. The primary driver of this surge was the food price component, with the Consumer Food Price Index-based inflation accelerating by a mind-numbing 696 basis points to 11.51 %, from June's 4.55 %. Save oils and fats, the 11 other items on the 12-member food and beverages group of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) logged year-on-year increases in prices.

Price of cereals (representing the basic staples of rice and wheat), the largest food component with an almost 10 % weight in the CPI surged by 13 % from July 2022 levels, posting a near

doubling in the month-on-month pace to 1.2 %.

Price of vegetables with a 6% contribution to the CPI increased by 37.3 % year-on-year, and 38.1% month-on-month in July. The prices of 18 of the 19 items in the vegetables sub-group registered appreciable sequential price gains, with onions (19 %), potato (11 %), cauliflower (32 %), brinjal (24 %), ginger and garlic (almost 21% each) and potassium-rich green chillies (46 %).

Tomato prices skyrocketed 214 % from June's levels. The all-India average retail price of the nutrient-rich food as on August 15 ₹107.87 a kilogram, over three times last year's Independence Day price of ₹31.66

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

JUNE EXPORTS TALLY RAISED BY \$1.4 BN

CONTEXT: India's goods exports slipped for the sixth month in a row in July.

The goods exports for June of \$ 34.35 billion was driven largely by a \$1.11 billion rise in petroleum products' exports. June recorded a trade deficit of \$18.75 billion with imports remaining virtually unchanged from the \$53.1 billion. Between April and July, petroleum exports have declined 32.5 % to \$23.67 billion, with officials attributing this to the fall in global oil prices rather than lower export volumes.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

WINDFALL TAX ON CRUDE, ATF, DIESEL EXPORT

CONTEXT: The Centre has raised the windfall profit tax on crude, ATF, diesel export.

- The Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on domestic crude oil was increased from ₹4,250 per tonne to ₹7,100 per tonne
- The Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on export of diesel was increased from ₹1 per litre to ₹5.5 per litre.
- A special additional excise duty (SAED) of ₹2 a litre will be imposed on export of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) from August 15.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

POVERTY ESTIMATES

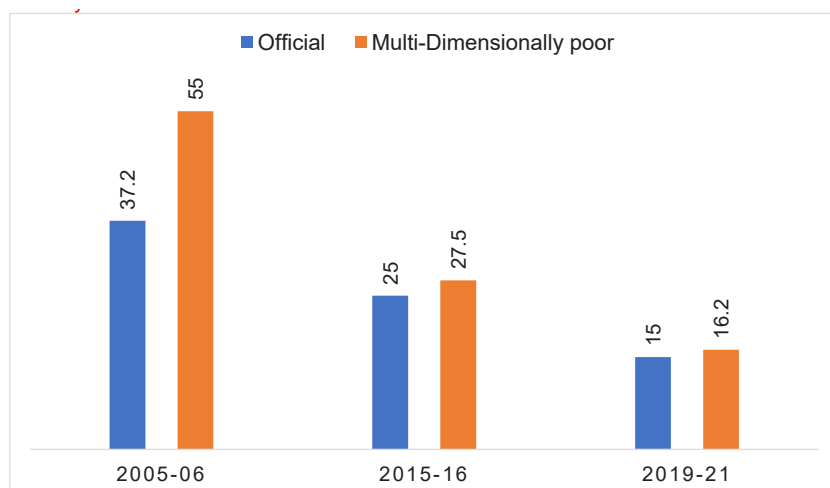


FIGURE: Column chart representation of official poverty estimates and Multidimensional poverty.

The Suresh Tendulkar Committee recorded a decline in number of poor by 13.7 Cr. between 2004-05 and 2011-12 despite an increase in population based on consumer expenditure. According to the Rangarajan Committee methodology, the decline between 2009-10 and 2011-12 is 92 million, which is 46 million per annum.

The Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measuring Poverty (2014) cited reservations on using multiple indicators as

these multidimensional indicators/measures raise several issues regarding their measurability, aggregation across indicators, and, crucially, of databases that provide the requisite information at reasonably short intervals. The multidimensional deprivations Collapsing many relevant but not necessarily commensurate dimensions into a single index makes little sense.

Aggregation: In principle, indicators should be independent. Access to safe drinking water cannot be aggregated with indicators such as child mortality. Analytically appropriate rules of aggregation require that independent indicators related to the same household.

The multidimensional poverty or deprivations can help analyse the progress of non-income indicators such as education, health, sanitation, drinking water, and child mortality over time with income or consumption poverty. It is important to supplement expenditure-based poverty estimates with other indicators of living standards, relating for instance to nutrition, health, education and the quality of the environment.

The differences in aggregate consumption estimates between National Accounts Statistics (NAS) and National Statistical Survey (NSS) data increased from less than 10 % in the late 1970s to 53.1 % in 2011-12, i.e., the Survey Estimate is only 46.9 % of NAS estimates.



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