

● POLITY

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

NO SC STAY ON PUBLICATION OF BIHAR CASTE SURVEY DATA

Counting conundrum

A look at the events prior to the SC's refusal to stay the uploading of data collected in the survey



claiming the State had no competence to conduct the survey

Aug. 6, 2023: Bihar government completes the survey, starts uploading the collated data

June 6, 2022: Bihar issues a notification to conduct caste-based survey at an estimated cost of ₹500 crore

Aug. 1, 2023: Patna HC dismisses petitions

- The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay the uploading of data collected in the recently concluded Bihar caste-based survey while debunking claims that the Nitish Kumar government has violated the fundamental right to privacy by compelling people to reveal their caste.
- The Supreme court held that the Right to Privacy is a fundamental right protected under Article 21 and Part III of the Indian Constitution.

Why Caste Survey?

- **Benefit in Policy Making:** The purpose of a caste census is not merely geared to the reservation issue; a caste census would actually bring to the fore the large number of issues that any democratic country needs to attend to, particularly the number of people who are at the margins, or who are deprived, or the kind of occupations they pursue.
- A caste census, which will generate exhaustive data will allow policymakers to develop better policies, implementation strategies, and will also enable a more rational debate on sensitive issues.
- **Reveal Privileged Section of Society:** Caste is not only a source of disadvantage; it is also a very important source of privilege and advantage in our society.
- There is a need to stop thinking of caste as being applicable to only disadvantaged people, poor people, people who are somehow lacking.
- **Caste has an Important Position in Indian Society:** While census data has been captured for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religions and linguistic profiles, there has been no profiling of all castes in India since 1931.
- Since then, caste has assumed an increasingly important position in our lives, and our reliance on inadequate data has also increased.



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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

GROWTH MIRAGE

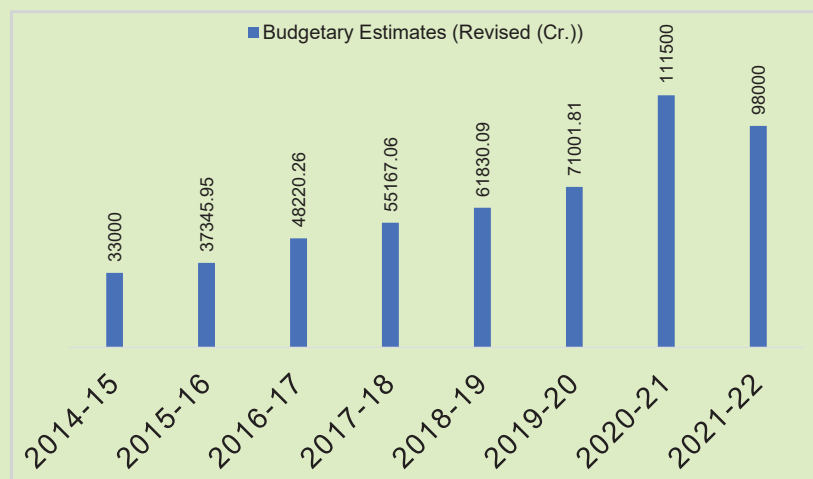


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the revised Budgetary allocations (Cr.) for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

CONTEXT: Employment elasticity measures the percentage change in employment associated with a 1 percentage point change in economic growth, indicating the ability of an economy to generate employment opportunities for its population as per cent of its growth process. Every percentage point of GDP growth in the decade 1980 to 1990 produced two lakh formal jobs. Every percentage point of GDP growth in the decade 1990 to 2000 produced one lakh formal jobs, and halved further in every subsequent decade.

People from higher castes constitute nearly 75 % of the formal service sector jobs that GDP growth produces while 80 % of workers under the MGNREGA programme are from the oppressed castes of Dalits, tribals and backward castes.

Traditional manufacturing such as automobile, steel, cement and semiconductors have lost their ability to create as many low-skilled jobs as they did earlier, primarily due to automation. Semiconductor manufacturing is highly automated and does not produce many jobs, especially for low-skilled workers. Thus, it is important to focus on the job intensity of economic initiatives rather than merely chase headline GDP growth.

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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

TRADE SLUMP

CONTEXT: India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in July 2023 is estimated to be USD 59.43 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of -5.06 per cent over July 2022. Overall imports in July 2023* is estimated to be USD 67.77 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of (-) 12.92 per cent over July 2022.



FIGURE: Comparative column chart representation of the exports and imports for the July 2022 and July 2023. (Source Union Ministry for Commerce and Industries). The latest data for services sector released by RBI is for June 2023. The data for July 2023 is an estimation, which

will be revised based on RBI's subsequent release. (ii) Data for April-July 2022 has been revised on pro-rata basis using quarterly balance of payments data.



FIGURE: Comparative column chart representation of the core merchandise exports and imports for the July 2022 and July 2023. (Source Union Ministry for Commerce and Industries). Core merchandise excludes petroleum, gems & Jewellery including gold, silver & pearls, precious & semi-precious stones.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CHANDRAYAAN-3 LANDER DEBOOSTING

CONTEXT: India's Chandrayaan-3 moon mission's lander module successfully deboosted its orbit, with a second operation planned, aiming for moon landing on August 23, to deploy a rover for surface analysis.

HIGHLIGHTS: India's Chandrayaan-3 mission's lander underwent successful deboosting, altering its orbit for a planned moon landing on August 23. The second deboosting operation is set for August 20. The lander will deploy a rover for chemical analysis, both equipped with scientific payloads for lunar experiments. The propulsion module's role includes transport and post-separation scientific operations.

ISRO released videos of the moon taken by Chandrayaan-3's cameras on August 15 and 17. The first showed it via the Lander Position Detection Camera, while the second, using the Lander Imager Camera-1, captured the moon after lander-propulsion module separation. ISRO shared the success on social media, preparing for a deboosting operation.

Deboosting in Space Science

Deboosting in space science refers to the intentional reduction of an object's orbital velocity, typically through engine firing, to lower its orbit or prepare for a controlled descent onto a celestial body.



POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CRIMINAL LAW BILLS SENT TO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS

CONTEXT: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday referred the three proposed laws that will replace the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act to the Standing Committee on Home Affairs for examination and asked it to submit its report within three months.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs (SCOHA) is a department related standing committee (DRSC) of selected members of parliament, constituted by the Parliament of India, for the purpose of legislative oversight of the domestic policy, internal security and decision making of the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is one of the 24 DRSCs that have been mandated with the onerous task of ministry specific oversight.

The committee currently is headed by MP Anand Sharma

Each of the committees have 31 members – 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha. These members are to be nominated by the Speaker of Lok Sabha or the Chairman of Rajya Sabha respectively. The term of office of these committees does not exceed one year. These committees are serviced either by Lok Sabha secretariat or the Rajya Sabha secretariat, depending on who has appointed the chairman of that committee.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ROOM-TEMPERATURE SUPER-CONDUCTOR HOPE FADED

CONTEXT: Hopes of room-temperature superconductivity with material LK-99 have dimmed. South Korean claims faced scrutiny, revealing it's an insulator, not a superconductor, due to impurities and temperature-related distortions.

BACKGROUND: The excitement sparked by South Korean researchers' claim of LK-99 as a room-temperature superconductor has faded. Though no official conclusion matched the initial announcement, preprint papers from both South Koreans and independent scientists were published to verify the claim. This prompted global efforts, including in India, to validate the findings. Ultimately, the material's behavior with weak magnetic fields and temperature-related distortions debunked its superconducting claims.

What are Superconductors?

Superconductors are materials that exhibit zero electrical resistance and expel magnetic fields when cooled below a certain critical temperature, allowing for efficient electricity flow and unique magnetic properties.

- **Zero Resistance:** Superconductors have no electrical resistance below a critical temperature, enabling efficient electricity transmission with minimal energy loss.
- **Magnetic Expulsion:** They expel magnetic fields, creating the Meissner effect, leading to applications in levitation and magnetic shielding.
- **Critical Temperature:** Each superconductor has a specific critical temperature, often requiring extremely low temperatures, limiting practical applications.
- **Potential Applications:** Superconductors offer high-performance technologies like powerful magnets for MRI, efficient power transmission, and advanced particle accelerators.
- **Cooling Challenge:** Achieving and maintaining the low temperatures needed for superconductivity is a major technical challenge for wider adoption in various fields.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

RBI DIRECTIVES ON 'PENAL INTEREST'

CONTEXT: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued fresh guidelines to banks, NBFCs and other lenders to ensure reasonableness and transparency in disclosure of penal interest.

New Directive: A penalty charged for non-compliance with material terms and conditions of loan contract by the borrower would be treated as 'penal charges' and shall not be levied in the form of 'penal interest' that is added to the rate of interest charged on the advances. There shall be no capitalisation of penal charges i.e., no further interest computed on such charges.

The intent of levying penal interest/charges is essentially to inculcate a sense of credit discipline and such charges are not meant to be used as a revenue enhancement tool over and above the contracted rate of interest. Supervisory reviews have indicated divergent practices with many lenders levying penal rates of interest, over and above applicable interest rates, in case of defaults/non-compliance by the borrower with the terms of the credit facility leading to customer grievances and disputes.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

SEMICONDUCTOR DIPLOMACY

CONTEXT: India and Japan agreed to collaborate on semiconductors with a focus upon five areas: 'semiconductor design, manufacturing, equipment research, establishing resilience in the semiconductor supply chain, and talent development'. The India-Japan partnership expected to shape the global semiconductor landscape, addressing new challenges such as semiconductor miniaturisation, AI integration, and quantum computing. Both nations have aligned their policies-India's "Make in India" initiative and Japan's "Society 5.0" vision to support semiconductor manufacturing and research with the goal of technological self-reliance and innovation-driven growth. Supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions, which are of particular significance in the Indo-Pacific region, have underscored the need for diversifying semiconductor supply chains and cross-country collaboration. Joint research initiatives enable the pooling of resources and expertise to tackle complex challenges in semiconductor design, manufacturing processes, and materials science.

India and United States would focus upon investment, innovation, and workforce development, facilitating the long-term strategic development of complementary semiconductor ecosystems. The U.S.'s CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, which places strategic curbs on the expansion of semiconductor manufacturing by countries posing a direct threat to the U.S., including China.

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