

Centre plans to take caste count during Census

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: The Indian government is currently considering adding a caste column to the upcoming Census form, sparking a renewed debate about the inclusion of caste data in official records. This decision is motivated by persistent calls from various political parties and the controversies surrounding previous attempts to collect caste-based information.

Past attempts

Other than enumeration of SCs and STs, the caste-wise count of population as part of the Census has not been done in Independent India

- In 2011, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) conducted the first-ever caste count, separate from the Census exercise, but the findings were never made public

- In 2015, the Congress government in Karnataka commissioned a caste census, the report of which has not been made public



- Bihar was one of the first States to conduct and publish a caste census report in 2023

The Caste Census Debate in India Introduction

The Indian government is considering adding a caste column to the upcoming Census, reigniting a long-standing debate about the inclusion of caste data in official records. This decision is influenced by persistent demands from political parties and the controversies surrounding previous attempts to collect such information.

Historical Context

- **Previous Caste Censuses:** India has not conducted a comprehensive caste census since its independence, except for enumerating Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

- **UPA Government's Attempt:** In 2011, the Congress-led UPA government conducted a caste census, but its findings were not made public due to concerns about accuracy and potential misuse.

Challenges and Controversies

- **Data Accuracy:** The government has raised concerns about the accuracy of previous caste census data, citing inconsistencies and potential for manipulation.
- **Political Implications:** The inclusion of caste data in the Census has been a contentious issue, with political parties holding differing views on its necessity and potential consequences.
- **Reservation and Discrimination:** Caste data has been used for implementing reservation policies, but there are concerns about its potential to perpetuate discrimination and social divisions.

Current Status

- **Government Deliberations:** The Union government is actively discussing the possibility of including a caste column in the next Census, but no final decision has been made.
- **State-Level Initiatives:** Some states, such as Bihar and Karnataka, have conducted their own

caste censuses, but the results have not always been publicly released.

- **Delayed Census:** The Census itself has been indefinitely delayed due to various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and disagreements over the inclusion of caste data.

Conclusion

The debate over the caste census in India continues to be a complex and politically charged issue. While some argue for its importance in understanding social inequalities and implementing targeted policies, others express concerns about its potential for misuse and discrimination. The government's decision on this matter will have significant implications for India's social and political landscape.

Growth of e-commerce a matter of concern: Goyal

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: The Minister's statement expresses concerns about the potential negative impacts of e-commerce on India's economy, particularly on small retailers and employment. He questions the business practices of major e-commerce players like Amazon, suggesting that their growth may be detrimental to the country's economic health.

E-COMMERCE IN INDIA: A BALANCING ACT Concerns Raised by Piyush Goyal

Predatory Pricing and Market Dominance: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal expressed concerns about the aggressive pricing strategies adopted by major e-commerce players like Amazon. He questioned whether such tactics were beneficial for the country and raised concerns about the potential for market dominance.

Impact on Small Retailers: Mr. Goyal highlighted the potential detrimental effects of

e-commerce on traditional small retailers. He worried about the possibility of massive social disruption if online retailers continued to erode the business prospects of millions of small businesses.

Dismissive of Positive Report: The Minister dismissed a report by EY India and Pahle India Foundation that concluded e-commerce had not significantly impacted employment in India. He suggested that the report's findings were driven by a desire to portray e-commerce in a positive light.

Focus on Cloud Kitchens and Online Food Delivery

Beyond traditional e-commerce, Mr. Goyal also flagged concerns about the impact of cloud kitchens and online food delivery apps on restaurants.

Amazon's Business Practices

The Minister specifically criticized Amazon's business practices. He pointed out the company's significant losses in India and questioned whether these losses were a result of predatory pricing. Mr. Goyal also raised concerns about Amazon's compliance with Indian regulations, particularly Press Note 3 of 2016, which restricts foreign direct investment in e-commerce companies that engage in business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions.

CONCLUSION: Mr. Goyal's statements highlight the growing concerns about the impact of e-commerce on India's economy and society. He emphasized the need for a balanced approach to



e-commerce growth, ensuring that it benefits both consumers and small businesses while adhering to Indian regulations.

Puja Khedkar's 'fraud' affected chances of other aspirants, UPSC tells Delhi HC

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

UPSC OPPOSES ANTICIPATORY BAIL PLEA BY FORMER IAS PROBATIONER



Fraudulent Clearing of UPSC Exam

- Former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar was granted interim protection from arrest.
- Accused of fraudulently clearing the UPSC exam by misusing OBC and disability quota benefits.
- UPSC opposes pre-arrest bail plea, citing the serious nature of fraud.

Delhi Police Seeks Dismissal of Bail Plea

- Delhi police argue that granting bail would hinder their investigation into a "deep-rooted conspiracy."
- Case has wider implications for public trust and integrity of civil services examination.
- Custodial interrogation of Khedkar is necessary to unearth the magnitude of the fraud.

Khedkar's Alleged Actions

- Khedkar allegedly made false declarations regarding her OBC category and the number of previous attempts.
- Allegedly appeared in multiple UPSC exams despite exhausting permissible attempts.
- Accused of hatching a conspiracy with others to obtain benefits unlawfully.

Court Extends Interim Protection

- The Court extends Khedkar's interim protection from arrest until August 29.
- Instructs Khedkar to respond to the UPSC's and Delhi police's arguments.
- The case highlights concerns about the integrity of the UPSC examination process.





VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

MASTER THE NEW LEARNING MANTRA

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

PM begins Poland visit

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Poland, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years, is significant for its historical commemorations, strengthening ties with the Indian diaspora, and its potential to enhance India's strategic and economic relations with Poland and the European Union amid ongoing global geopolitical shifts.



Prime Minister Modi's Historic Visit to Poland

Prime Minister Narendra Modi commenced his visit to Poland, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years. Upon his arrival in Warsaw, he was warmly received by Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Władysław T. Bartoszewski. The visit is seen as a significant step towards strengthening India-Poland relations.

Tribute to Historical Figures and Events

In his first engagement, PM Modi paid homage to Jam Saheb

Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja of Nawanagar, Gujarat, who had provided sanctuary to over 1,000 Polish children during World War II. A square in Warsaw has been named "Dobrego Maharadzy" or "Good Maharaja Square" in his honor.

PM Modi also laid wreaths at the monument for the Battle of Monte Cassino and the Kolhapur memorial, paying respects to Indian and Polish soldiers who fought in the Second World War. The Battle of Monte Cassino was a crucial victory for Polish forces as part of the Allied powers.

Significance of the Visit

Krzysztof Iwanek, an Indologist, highlighted the importance of PM Modi's visit, noting that it represents New Delhi's balancing act between the West and Russia, with visits to Ukraine and Russia also planned. The visit is also expected to explore opportunities for deepening trade and investment ties, particularly in the context of ongoing negotiations between India and the European Union for an investment deal and a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).



INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

START YOUR
JOURNEY WITH THE
BEST

Rajnath to seal mega defence deals

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is scheduled to visit the United States from August 23 to 26, amid the finalization of several significant defence deals between India and the U.S. His visit is particularly crucial due to ongoing concerns, such as delays in the delivery of GE's F404 engines for India's Light Combat Aircraft-Mk1A, which has affected Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's ability to deliver jets to the Indian Air Force.

The visit aims to further enhance the growing India-U.S. comprehensive global strategic partnership, with Mr. Singh expected to hold key meetings with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. Additionally, he will chair a round-table discussion with the U.S. defence industry on current and future collaborations and will engage with the Indian community in the U.S.

SC makes suo motu move to reform advocates' bodies

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court has initiated a suo motu case to reform Bar associations and Bar Councils across India. The Court is concerned about the high expenses incurred by candidates during elections, arbitrary admission criteria, poor facilities, and the election of individuals with criminal antecedents as office-bearers. The Court has appointed nodal counsels to collect suggestions from Bar associations and State Bar Councils to address these issues.

16 MPs and 135 MLAs booked for crimes against women

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

A report of a study conducted by Association of Democratic Rights finds that 16 MPs and 135 MLAs have declared cases related to crimes against women registered against them. The highest number of such lawmakers are from West Bengal. The Bharatiya Janata Party has the highest number of MPs or MLAs with such cases registered against them, followed by the Congress. Among the States, West Bengal has the highest number of sitting MPs or MLAs with these cases against them, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The report also says that there are two MPs and 14 MLAs who have declared cases related to rape under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code.

The
More
You Learn,
The
More
You Earn



www.vedhikiasacademy.org



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

[f](#) [@](#) [in](#) [v](#)

SC to examine need for environmental regulator

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court is considering the establishment of a permanent environmental regulator, similar to those in the telecom and electricity sectors. This move comes in response to concerns about the current regulatory landscape and the need for a more unified approach to environmental and climate change issues.

Arguments for and Against a New Regulator

- **Amicus Curiae's Argument:** The amicus curiae, senior advocate K. Parameshwar, suggested that the current regulatory system is fragmented, with regulators operating in silos. He proposed consolidating these regulators into a single, overarching body.
- **Centre's Position:** The Union government expressed a mixed response to the idea. The Additional Solicitor General argued that the existing system, with multiple tiers of decision-making and review, is adequate and that adding another regulator could lead to duplication and inefficiency.

Specific Issue: Mining Activities in Conservation Reserves

In a separate application, the Supreme Court asked the Centre to consider prohibiting mining activities in areas declared conservation reserves and community reserves. This raises questions about the balance between economic development and environmental protection.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision to examine the need for a permanent environmental regulator reflects the growing importance of environmental issues and the need for effective regulation. The outcome of this examination will likely have significant implications for environmental policy and governance in India.

New polio strain suspected in Meghalaya'

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: A case of poliomyelitis has been diagnosed in a two-year-old child in Meghalaya, India. The World Health Organization (WHO) is investigating the possibility of a new strain of polio being involved.



The Case

- A two-year-old child from Tikrikilla, West Garo Hills district, has been diagnosed with poliomyelitis.
- The State government is awaiting test results to confirm the strain of polio.
- The Union Health Ministry has indicated that the case is likely a vaccine-derived poliovirus infection.

Impact on Vaccination Efforts

- The case may impact vaccination efforts in Meghalaya, as the region has a history of resistance to vaccination.
- The State government is closely monitoring the

- situation and providing medical care to the affected child.

WHO's Role

- The WHO is investigating the case to determine the exact strain of polio involved.

- The organization may issue an advisory if a new strain is confirmed.

Conclusion

The emergence of a potential new polio strain in Meghalaya is a concerning development, as India has been declared polio-free for several years. The WHO's investigation will be crucial in understanding the nature of the case and determining appropriate public health measures.

New plant genome editing tool

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

CONTEXT: Researchers have developed a new plant genome editing tool that is smaller and more efficient than existing CRISPR systems. This tool, based on the ISDra2TnpB protein from *Deinococcus radiodurans* bacteria, holds the potential to revolutionize plant breeding and agriculture.



The Challenge of CRISPR in Plants

CRISPR, a popular gene-editing tool, has been limited in its use for plant genomes due to the large size of its Cas9 and Cas12 proteins. These proteins are too bulky to fit into plant cells.

The TnpB Solution

The researchers developed a plant genome editor using the ISDra2TnpB protein, which is significantly smaller than Cas9 and Cas12. TnpB can target specific DNA sequences and edit them with high efficiency.

Key Features of the TnpB-Based Editor

- **Size:** TnpB is less than half the size of Cas9 and Cas12, making it more suitable for plant cells.
- **Efficiency:** The TnpB-based editor achieved a 33.58% editing efficiency in average plant genomes, surpassing the capabilities of Cas9 and Cas12.
- **Versatility:** The editor can be used for both base editing and transcription activation, allowing for precise genetic modifications.
- **Compatibility:** It is effective in both monocots (like rice) and dicots (like Arabidopsis).

Improving Editing Efficiency

The researchers optimized the TnpB-based editor by:

- **Codon optimization:** Adjusting the codon bias to match that of rice protoplasts.
- **Regulatory element optimization:** Using promoters and terminators to enhance TnpB expression.

Potential Applications

The TnpB-based editor could be used to:

- Remove anti-nutrient factors from food crops.
- Reduce crop susceptibility to pests.
- Develop shorter rice varieties that are less prone to damage during cyclones.

Future Directions

While the TnpB-based editor shows promise, further research is needed to optimize its performance in different plant species and applications. Additionally, exploring its use in field conditions is crucial for practical implementation in agriculture.

Power play

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Hydropower projects must factor in the environmental costs too



Recent Disasters Highlight Environmental Risks

The recent landslides in Sikkim and Wayanad have underscored the environmental risks associated with hydropower projects. In particular, the Teesta river basin in Sikkim has experienced several setbacks due to natural disasters.

Teesta River Basin: A Hub for Hydropower Projects

The Teesta river, originating in North Sikkim, offers significant potential for hydropower development. However, the region's challenging terrain and susceptibility to natural disasters pose significant risks.

Balancing Environmental Costs and Economic Benefits

Hydropower projects in the region have faced challenges in balancing environmental concerns, project costs, public perception, and profitability. The Teesta-3 project, which was washed away by a glacial lake outburst, serves as a cautionary tale.

Importance of Environmental Impact Assessments

Environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for hydropower projects must provide accurate estimates of environmental costs. This will not only enhance public trust but also ensure the sustainability of these projects.

Conclusion

The future of hydropower development in the Teesta river basin depends on a careful consideration of environmental factors and the implementation of robust mitigation measures. By prioritizing environmental sustainability, governments and developers can ensure that these projects



MASTER THE NEW LEARNING MANTRA



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Imports weaken Indian pharma

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT



The Challenge of Affordability

Ensuring the affordability of pharmaceuticals is crucial in India, where out-of-pocket health expenditures are high. While the government has taken steps to regulate prices, promoting local production is a more effective approach.

Government Initiatives and Their Impact

The government's recent initiatives to import critical medicines could have a negative impact on the domestic

pharmaceutical industry. These initiatives include:

- **Global tendering for 120 medicines:** This could strengthen the monopoly control of foreign companies.
- **Customs duty waiver for cancer medicines:** This would do little to reduce prices significantly.

Barriers to Domestic Production

Two major barriers hinder the domestic production of pharmaceuticals:

- **Product patent regime:** Patents protect new medicines, limiting generic production.
- **Regulatory guidelines:** Obtaining marketing approval for biosimilars is time-consuming and costly.

Leveraging the Patents Act

The Patents Act provides several provisions to promote domestic production, including:

- **Compulsory licensing:** This allows for the production of generic versions of patented medicines.
- **Government-use licenses:** These can be granted to enable domestic production of generic versions.

Addressing Regulatory Challenges

The guidelines for marketing approval of biosimilars in India need to be updated to align with international standards. This would reduce the burden on domestic producers and facilitate their entry into the market.

Conclusion

The government's focus on imports could weaken the domestic pharmaceutical industry. To promote local production and ensure affordability, India needs to:

- Review its recent decisions.
- Align its policies with the provisions of the Patents Act.
- Streamline regulatory guidelines for biosimilars.
- Foster a competitive environment for critical medicines.



START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE
BEST

INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

Review of job created in three years

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

CONTEXT: There is the claim that India created 8 crore new jobs in three years. However, there is an argument that the data supporting this claim is flawed and misleading and that the actual number of meaningful jobs created is significantly lower.



THE GIST

- KLEMS stands for Capital (K), Labour (L), Energy (E), Material (M) and Services (S). It is a framework used to measure industry-level “total factor productivity” (TFP), which is considered a measure of the efficiency of all the inputs to produce a unit of output. The objective of the KLEMS framework is not to produce data on employment.
- In India-KLEMS, the estimates of population in 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 were borrowed from the Economic Survey (ES), 2021-22. The

ES projected these populations by assuming that population growth rates between 2001 and 2011 were the same for the years after 2011.

- Data from India-KLEMS, which was designed for very different purposes, are being used to drive a political narrative on employment generation.

The Claim of 8 Crore New Jobs in India: A Critical Analysis

The Government's Claim

Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that India created 8 crore new jobs in the last three to four years, based on data from the India-KLEMS database. The State Bank of India (SBI) report corroborated this claim.

Doubts and Concerns

Analysts have raised concerns about the methodology and accuracy of the India-KLEMS database. They argue that the data may not accurately reflect the number of meaningful jobs created.

Understanding India-KLEMS

The India-KLEMS database was designed to measure total factor productivity, not employment. It relies on data from various sources, including the Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS).

Issues with the Data

- **Population estimates:** The database uses population projections that may be inaccurate, especially for rural areas.
- **Worker Population Ratio (WPR):** The WPR may not accurately reflect the number of meaningful jobs, as it includes unpaid and part-time work.
- **Sectoral coverage:** The ASUSE, used by the SBI report, does not cover all sectors of the economy.

A More Accurate Picture

A closer analysis of PLFS data suggests that the rise in employment is largely due to an increase in unpaid and part-time work, particularly among rural women. There has been limited growth in meaningful and paid employment.

Conclusion

The claim of 8 crore new jobs in India is likely exaggerated. The data used to support this claim is flawed and does not accurately reflect the number of meaningful jobs created. The government's focus on employment generation should be based on accurate data and policies that promote quality employment opportunities.

Euro emerges as winner from market turmoil

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

CONTEXT: The euro has emerged as a strong performer in global currency markets, reaching its highest level against the dollar this year due to shifting rate differentials between the European Central Bank and the U.S. Federal Reserve, alongside easing political risks in Europe. However, analysts suggest that further gains may be limited as the euro approaches the top of its recent trading range.



Euro Gains Amid Market Turmoil

The euro has surged to its highest level this year against the dollar, benefitting from recent disruptions in global currency markets, including a weakening dollar and a halt to the yen's decline. The euro's more than 2.5% gain in August marks its best month since November, positioning it as the second-best performing major currency against the dollar in 2023, after the British pound.

Factors Driving the Euro's Strength

The euro's rise is attributed to expectations of U.S. Federal Reserve rate cuts and a more limited scope for further European Central Bank (ECB) easing due to persistent service-sector inflation. The narrowing interest rate differential between the Fed and the ECB has favored the euro, with the ECB likely to cut rates further, though less aggressively than the Fed.

Market Sentiment and Future Outlook

Despite its recent gains, analysts suggest that the euro may face challenges in sustaining its momentum. It is currently near the top of its recent trading range, with limited room for further rate differential shifts. Predictions for the euro's value by year-end vary, with some experts forecasting stability around \$1.11-\$1.12, while others believe the current levels may represent the peak for 2023.

Risks and Uncertainties

The euro's continued strength is tempered by concerns over a slowing economic rebound in the eurozone and declining German investor confidence. Conversely, upcoming U.S. job data may reveal whether recent weak reports were anomalies, potentially impacting the euro's trajectory.

Rising youth unemployment in China

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Rising Youth Unemployment in China

China's youth unemployment has reached alarming levels, with the jobless rate for those aged 16-24 surpassing 20% for the first time in April 2022 and hitting a record 21.3% in June 2023. This spike in unemployment has forced many young people, including college graduates, into difficult situations, leading to the emergence of a new working class dubbed "rotten-tail kids."



Struggling Graduates and the "Rotten-Tail Kids" Phenomenon

The term "rotten-tail kids" has gained popularity on social media, reflecting the plight of young graduates who are unable to find suitable jobs despite their qualifications. Many are accepting low-paying work or relying on their parents' pensions, as the oversupply of college graduates has outstripped job availability, especially in an economy weakened by COVID-19 disruptions and regulatory crackdowns.

Government Response and Limited Job Prospects

The Chinese government, under President Xi Jinping, has prioritized finding jobs for young people, encouraging job fairs and supportive business policies. However, the challenges persist, with many graduates finding their degrees insufficient to secure jobs in the current market. Even those with advanced degrees are struggling, leading some to reconsider their career paths or further their education in hopes of better prospects.

Uncertain Future and Long-Term Trends

The job market outlook for Chinese graduates remains uncertain, with ongoing concerns about the oversupply of graduates relative to job demand. Studies predict that the supply of tertiary students will continue to exceed demand until 2037, with new college graduates peaking around 18 million in 2034. This situation could worsen before improving, particularly as the effects of falling fertility rates begin to impact the labor market in the coming decades.



MASTER THE NEW LEARNING MANTRA



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

www.vedhikiasacademy.org



VEDHIK

IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S
TOP MOST
CIVIL SERVANTS
FOR COACHING**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Head Office:
Vedhik IAS Academy
Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:
Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office
Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:
Bobscoedu,
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com