



● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

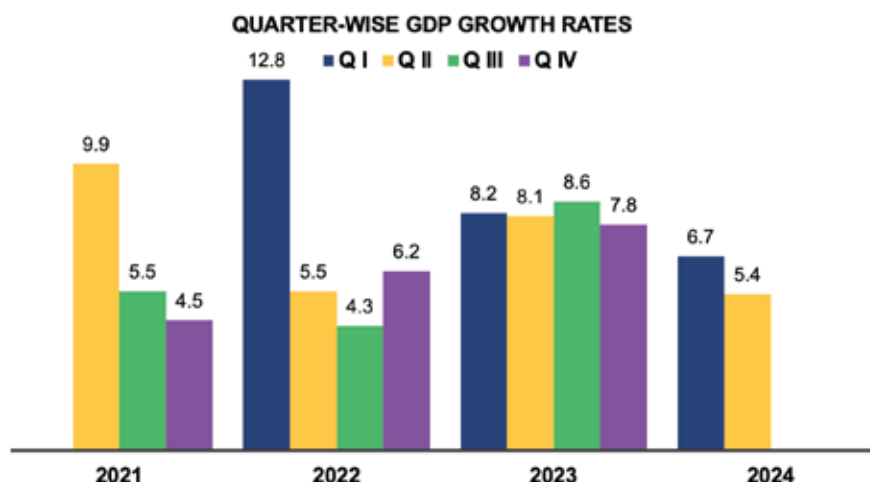
## GDP growth hits 5.4% in Q2, lowest in 7 quarters

### ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

**CONTEXT:** India's real GDP growth fell to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 % in the July-September 2024 quarter, down from 6.7 % in Q1, and much below earlier projections, including the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 7 % estimate.

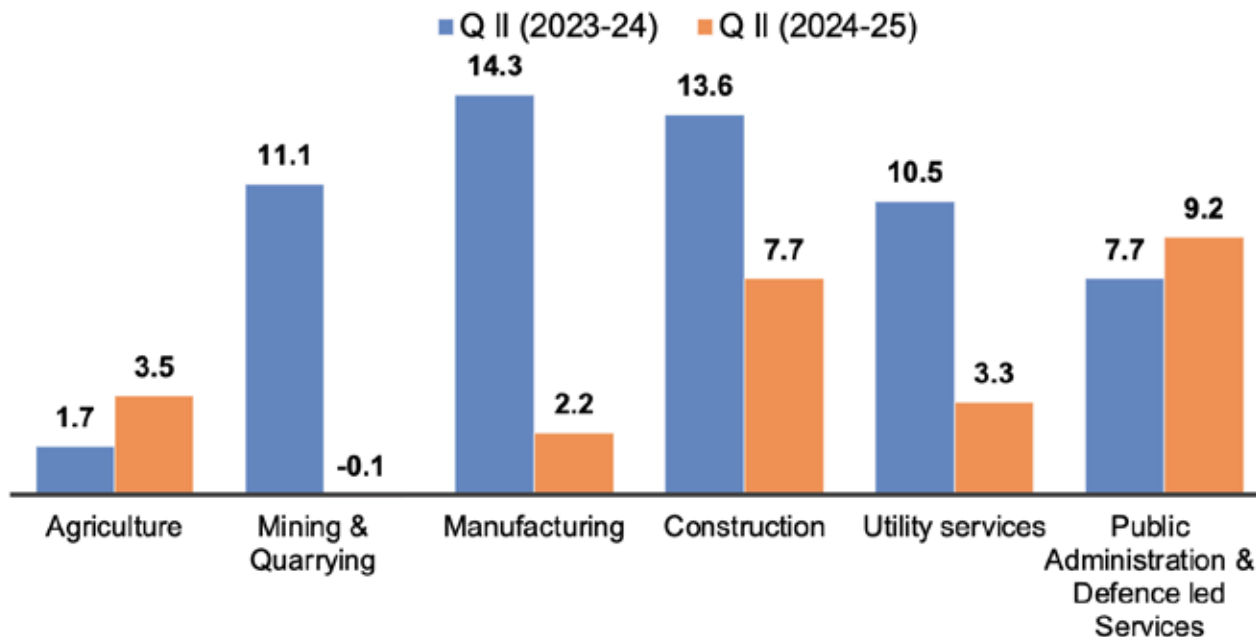
The RBI and Finance Ministry project full-year growth in the 6.5 % to 7.2 % range, requiring a significant rebound in the second half of the year. The growth rates mark a notable slowdown compared to the 8.2 % growth in the first half of 2023-24.

Gross Value Added (GVA) growth also declined to 5.8 % from 6.8 % in Q1 contrasting with higher growth figures in the same quarter of 2023-24 when GDP grew by 8.1 % and GVA by 7.7 %. For the first half of 2024-25, GDP growth stood at 6 %, the slowest in three years, and GVA growth was 6.2 %.



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the quarter wise domestic GDP growth rates.

### SECTORIAL GVA PERFORMANCE



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the comparative quarter wise sectorial GVA growth rates.

The lower-than-expected GDP figures to weak corporate earnings and a struggling manufacturing sector, predict a potential one percentage point drop in annual growth compared to the RBI's 7.2 % estimate. Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran, however, remained optimistic, describing the 5.4 % growth as a temporary anomaly caused by cooling urban demand.

Silver lining

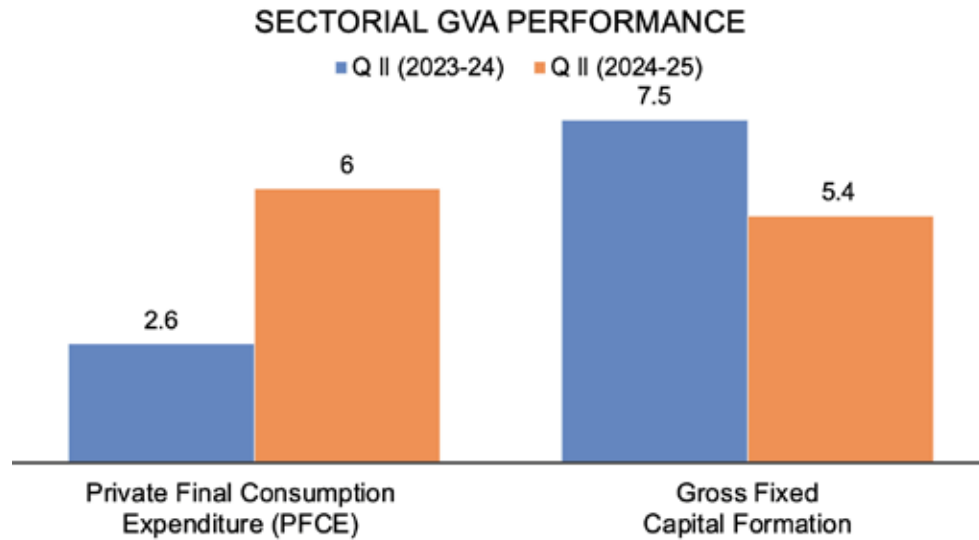


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the comparative quarter wise sectorial GVA growth rates.

## Global Plastics Treaty draft overlooks key issue of limiting production, says group of countries

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** A preliminary draft of the Global Plastics Treaty at the United Nations-led Global Plastic Treaty negotiations in Busan, South Korea has been released.

A group of 67 countries, including the EU and the High Ambition Coalition, criticized the plastic treaty for insufficiently addressing its core goal of limiting plastic production, trade, and the harm caused by its constituent chemicals. The key disagreements include the EU's proposal for a global target to reduce primary plastic polymer production and implementing measures to identify and mitigate health risks from plastic pollution.

**Playing safe**

India, Saudi Arabia, and China, among other countries with major polymer manufacturing economies, oppose including references to limiting plastic polymer production in the treaty, already regulated under existing



conventions like the Rotterdam, Basel, and Stockholm Conventions. Panama's Head of Delegation, Juan Monterrey, emphasize the need to address plastic production in the treaty to prevent it from doubling by mid-century, which could result in plastic outweighing fish in the oceans. Monterrey warned that the issue might be put to a vote if consensus cannot be reached.

Scientific evidence highlights the severe health and environmental impacts of plastics, with microplastics found in placentas and 60 % of seafood, prompting calls for stronger regulatory measures. Fiji's Permanent Secretary for Environment, Sivendra Michael, stressed the need for firm health-focused provisions, noting that only 6% of harmful chemicals are currently regulated.

The Global Plastics Treaty draft text proposes that all countries develop and regularly update national action plans on plastics, a largely uncontested provision. EU representative Anthony Agotha acknowledged the benefits of plastics in reducing vehicle weight but underscored the necessity of eliminating polluting plastics.

# Scientists, industry demand passage of new Seeds Bill, changes in policy

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**CONTEXT:** Scientists, experts, and industry partners at National Seed Congress (NSC) asked the Centre to revisit and modernise the Seeds Bill of 2004 and the Seeds Policy of 2002 to incorporate the latest developments in the sector.

India's Seeds Act, 1966, and Seeds Rules, 1968, have not been updated, and the country's seed certification standards lag behind international norms with regard to the importance of clearly defining "farmer seed" and "commercial seed" to address regulatory gaps and improve the seed sector. Malvika Dadlani, former Joint Director of IARI, highlighted the need to strengthen India's seed quality assurance system to align with international standards, ensuring better outcomes for farmers.

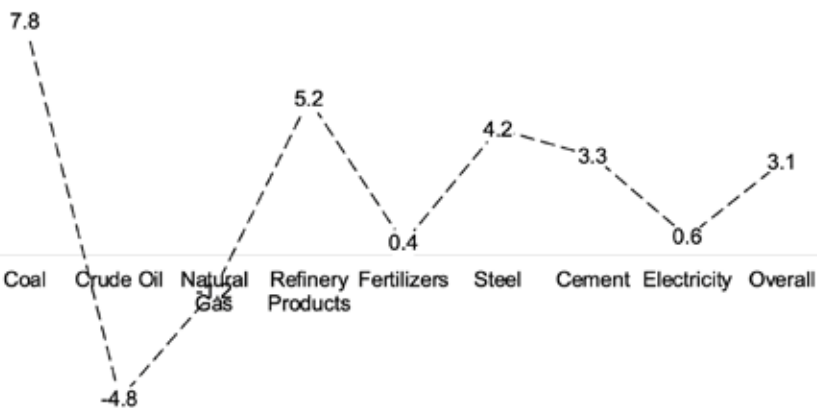
The Seeds Bill, introduced in 2004, remains unpassed due to opposition from farmers, prompting calls for an updated policy reflecting current challenges in the seeds sector. Scientists emphasized the need to balance innovation, farmer empowerment, and policy reforms for a globally competitive seed industry. They suggested reworking the bill by engaging stakeholders to address farmers' concerns and fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors for delivering affordable, high-quality seeds.

# Core sectors' output up 3.1% in Oct.; best performance in three months

## ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

**CONTEXT:** The Index of Core Industries (ICI) which had slumped to a 10-month low in September, recovered 3.9 % on a sequential basis to a provisional number of 161.3 in October. The Commerce and Industry Ministry also revised upwards the core sectors' growth in September to 2.4 % from a previously estimated 2 %.

CORE SECTOR GROWTH RATES OCT 24



**FIGURE:** Line chart representation of the core sector growth rates in October 2024.

- **Coal:** Positive, driven by strong demand, particularly from the power and industrial sectors. As energy needs remain high, coal output is likely to continue its upward trajectory in the short term.
- **Refinery Products:** Stable to positive, with ongoing industrial demand and recovery in fuel consumption. However, global oil price fluctuations and energy transitions may moderate growth in the longer term.
- **Steel:** Positive, supported by the government's push for infrastructure development and construction. However, steel production could face pressures from global price volatility and supply chain issues.
- **Electricity:** Modest growth expected, with energy demand likely to rise with industrial recovery. However,

growth in generation remains constrained by factors like underperformance in renewable energy capacity and low absolute generation levels.

- **Cement:** Mixed, with some improvement expected in the short term due to infrastructure projects. However, cement production could face challenges from increasing input costs (like energy) and slower demand in certain regions.
- **Fertilizers:** Limited growth in the short term, as the sector is tied to agricultural cycles. Global supply chain issues and input cost rises, particularly for chemicals and raw materials, could hinder growth.
- **Natural Gas:** Negative, with reduced production continuing due to depletion of older reserves and challenges in exploration. However, there may be a longer-term rebound as the government pushes for greater exploration and cleaner energy alternatives.

**Crude Oil:** Negative, primarily due to stagnating domestic production. India’s increasing reliance on imports for oil needs is likely to continue, which may limit growth in the sector.

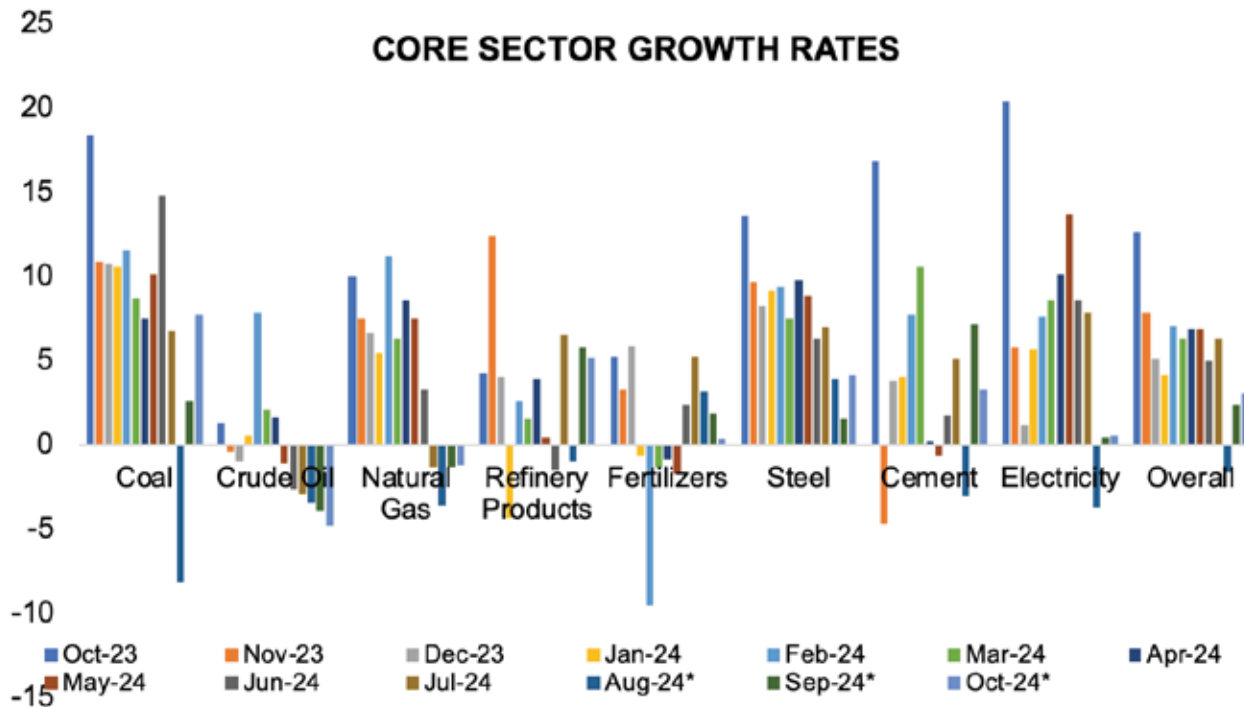


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the core sector growth rates.

## Bangladeshi politicians urge calm after sectarian clash raises tension

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



**CONTEXT:** Bangladesh’s leading political parties have called for calm following widespread unrest in the country triggered by the killing of a lawyer during clashes between Hindu protesters and security forces.

Public prosecutor Saiful Islam Alif died on Tuesday as angry supporters of outspoken Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari — arrested for allegedly disrespecting the Bangladeshi flag during a rally — battled with police when he was denied bail. Religious relations have been turbulent in the Muslim-majority nation of 170 million people since student-led protests in August toppled ex-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who then left to neighbouring India. The Bangladeshi National Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami — Ms. Hasina’s two main opponents

during her 15-year tenure — have urged restraint.

Shafiqur Rahman of Jamaat blamed the ongoing unrest on a “vested group plotting to destabilise the country”. Street protests have nonetheless been called to demand a ban on the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), that Mr. Das reportedly belonged to. Hefazat-e-Islam, a collective of Islamic seminaries, held a rally on Friday to demand the group’s prohibition, alleging it was a front to return Ms. Hasina to power on behalf of India, her ousted government’s biggest benefactor.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh’s financial authorities have ordered freezing for 30 days the bank accounts of 17 people associated with ISKCON, including Mr. Das, according to media reports. Bangladesh Bank’s Financial Intelligence Unit

(BFIU) sent these directives to different banks and financial institutions, suspending all types of transactions in these accounts.

## ONOS bitten

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**CONTEXT:** India's "One Nation, One Subscription" (ONOS) plan initially proposed in the 2020 National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy aims to improve public access to research papers by centralizing subscriptions, addressing the high fees charged by research journals for access to published papers.

Under the traditional model, journals charge both individual readers and institutions, leading to collaboration among libraries to negotiate better deals. With ONOS, the national government replaces these consortia, negotiating a single subscription fee, making expensive journals accessible to underfunded government institutes.

The government's decision to allocate ₹6,000 crore to support subscription fees for 30 major publishers under the ONOS initiative, which will be limited to publicly funded institutes. The author argues that this approach continues to reinforce the dominance of commercial publishers over scholarly publishing, despite many journals being funded by public research.

Instead, the government could have promoted alternative open-access models like 'green' or 'diamond' open-access, or supported home-grown journals that align with Indian scholars' needs. The lack of transparency in the initiative, including how journals will be monitored for relevance or quality, and the absence of consultation with academic institutions, are seen as significant flaws. The shift towards 'gold' open-access and the growing popularity of preprint papers further diminishes the justification for ONOS in its current form.

## Indians need to share contraceptive responsibility

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**CONTEXT:** In 1952, India pioneered a national programme for family planning, whose focus has since changed — from improving maternal and child health to stabilising the population. As this programme evolved, so too did permanent methods of contraception.

During 1966-70, about 80.5% of all sterilisation procedures in India were vasectomies. This percentage declined every year due to changing policies that, together with other factors, placed less and less of an emphasis on vasectomies. The five rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) also show the use of male sterilisation, especially in the last three decades, to be steadily decreasing in all States. In fact, the vasectomies percentage remained constant at around 0.3% in NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5.

Gender and the disparity

The ongoing gender disparity in sterilisation rates in India, with female sterilisation rates at 37.9 % and male sterilisation at only 0.3 %. This contrasts with the goal set by the National Health Policy 2017, which aimed to increase male sterilisation to 30 %. The imbalance continues to place the burden of sterilisation on women, hindering progress toward achieving gender equality (Sustainable Development Goal 5). Efforts like Vasectomy Day and initiatives such as the 2017 "vasectomy fortnight" aim to raise awareness, challenge misconceptions, and encourage men to consider vasectomies. However, despite these efforts, policies still overlook practical issues, allowing the gender gap in sterilisation rates to persist.

### The ground reality, solutions

They were challenges in promoting vasectomy among men in rural India, citing a survey conducted in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Maharashtra. Women in the village expressed that sterilisation is their responsibility, and men often believe undergoing a vasectomy would burden them further, both financially and physically. Many men are unaware of government incentives to compensate for lost wages, and misconceptions about the procedure's impact on libido and male ego contribute to poor acceptance. The lack of skilled providers, particularly in rural areas, and insufficient knowledge among community health workers about no-scalpel vasectomies exacerbate the situation.

The growing awareness of gender equality, male sterilisation can become widely accepted through proper education and policy changes. It recommends starting sensitisation in schools, using awareness programs and peer-group discussions to establish sterilisation as a shared responsibility. Social and behaviour change initiatives are needed to dispel myths and reduce the stigma around vasectomies, which are safer and simpler than tubectomies. Additionally, increasing

conditional cash incentives for vasectomies, as seen in a 2019 study in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh's 2022 move to raise the incentive, could encourage more male participation in sterilisation.

### An international comparison

India need to learn from countries with high vasectomy uptake, such as South Korea, Bhutan, and Brazil, which have increased male participation through progressive societal norms, government-run camps, and media awareness campaigns. It emphasizes that greater public awareness enables informed family planning decisions for both partners. To support this, India must strengthen its healthcare system by training more professionals to perform vasectomies and promoting advancements in non-scalpel techniques. The policy should not only set intentions but also outline concrete steps to meet targets, focusing on both demand and service improvements, rather than just policy formulation.

## Focus on security issues along eastern border : Amit Shah

### INTERNAL SECURITY



**CONTEXT:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah asked the police and intelligence agencies should focus on emerging security challenges along the eastern borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Mr. Shah inaugurated the annual Director General of Police (DGP) conference organised by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) at Bhubaneswar in Odisha. Mr. Shah noted that other areas of attention include immigration and trends in urban policing. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the conference on Saturday and Sunday where he will interact with the top police brass of the country.

Mr. Shah lauded the efforts of the police leadership for the smooth conduct of the General Election and the seamless rollout of the three new criminal laws. In the next two days, the police leadership of the country would chalk out a roadmap to counter existing and emerging national security challenges, including Left wing extremism, coastal security, narcotics, cybercrime and economic security. The progress in implementation of the new criminal laws would also be reviewed.



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