

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIR (13 September 2024)

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## Muslim panel members offer to demolish 'illegal' parts of Shimla mosque (13 September)

Welfare committee members also agree to seal the entire portion of the expanded structure; Congress Ministers in State claim attempt being made to give a communal colour to the episode

- In Shimla's Sanjauli area, there has been tension over "illegal portions" of a mosque.
- Two ministers, Anirudh Singh and Vikramaditya Singh, said that the mosque committee has voluntarily agreed to seal and demolish the expanded parts of the mosque.
- The mosque's representatives, including the president and Waqf Board members, handed over a letter to the Municipal Corporation agreeing to seal the unauthorized portions.
- The mosque committee has also asked for permission to demolish the illegal parts of the mosque.
- The ministers claimed that some people are trying to give the situation a communal twist for their own interests.
- They also accused the previous BJP government of allowing the unauthorized structure to be built during the COVID-19 period.
- The ministers mentioned that officials responsible for preventing illegal construction at the time will be investigated.
- Eight FIRs have been filed against more than 50 protesters involved in demonstrations near the mosque on September 5 and 11.
- The police are continuing their investigation and increasing security at Shimla's 14 mosques.
- A three-hour bandh (strike) was observed in Shimla, with shops and businesses closed in protest against police action on demonstrators.

## CAG uncovers irregularities in Odisha's mining sector (13 September)

- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India reported major irregularities in Odisha's mining sector, estimating a loss of ₹22,392.51 crore.

- The loss was due to issues such as lower-grade iron ore being reported as screened fines, non-use of sub-grade iron ore, incorrect royalty assessment, exceeding production limits, and production without proper clearances.
- After auctions were introduced to improve transparency, a loophole was found where iron ore grades declined significantly in some selected mines.
- Before the auction, more than 83% of the iron ore production was of high grade (62-65% iron content), but this dropped to just 16% after the auction (2020-2022).
- Lower-grade iron ore (60% iron content or below) rose from 11% to over 60% of production after the auction.
- One specific mine saw its high-grade iron ore production drop from 77% before the auction to 9.88% in one year, and to 0% in the following year under the new operator.
- The CAG found it unlikely that the quality of minerals would decrease so drastically within such a short period after the auction.

## ‘Mission Mausam’ to boost radar network to seed, tweak clouds (13 September)

- The ₹2,000-crore "Mission Mausam" was approved by the Cabinet to improve weather forecasting and research on weather modification.
- By 2026, the Ministry of Earth Sciences plans to install 60 weather radars, 15 wind profilers, and 15 radiosondes to monitor wind speed, pressure, humidity, and temperature at different heights.
- This data will help make rain forecasts more accurate.
- A cloud-simulation chamber will be set up at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, to model rain clouds more precisely.
- The goal is to explore "weather interventions" like cloud seeding to control rainfall and reduce lightning risks.
- India's current weather radar coverage is insufficient, with only 39 radars (one per 432 km), compared to the U.S., which has 160 radars (one per 154 km).

## A 16-point document on judicial values was adopted by SC in 1997 (13 September)

- There are concerns about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's house for Ganesh Puja, raising questions about judicial propriety.
- These concerns are based on a 16-point document called "Restatement of Values of Judicial Life," adopted by the Supreme Court in 1997.
- The document provides guidelines for the conduct of Supreme Court and High Court judges, emphasizing impartiality.
- Judges are advised to avoid actions that may erode public trust in the judiciary.
- It stresses that judges must maintain a degree of aloofness appropriate to their high office and remain aware that they are under public scrutiny.
- The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms, led by Prashant Bhushan, highlights the need for judges to act in ways that maintain public confidence and uphold ethical conduct in interactions with high-ranking officials.
- Former Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah had once explained that the relationship between the judiciary and the executive should be "correct," not "cordial," meaning the two branches should maintain a proper distance to ensure checks and balances.
- The judiciary is responsible for protecting the Constitution and ensuring justice, and it must appear completely independent from the executive (government).
- Kapil Sibal, a senior advocate, said that Chief Justice Chandrachud is known for his integrity, but noted that even a video of the Prime Minister's visit could lead to unnecessary gossip, which could harm the judiciary's image. He emphasized that religious beliefs should remain private.
- Indira Jaising, another senior advocate, criticized the Chief Justice for compromising the separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive.
- However, Manan Kumar Mishra, chairperson of the Bar Council of India, downplayed the controversy, saying it was just a social and religious event that wouldn't affect any Supreme Court rulings.

## Left leader who could juggle multiple identities with élan

**Marxist, political strategist, polyglot who could speak in the language of the person on the street, Sitaram Yechury played many parts and he could not be tied down to any one label; he revelled in bringing disparate ideological strands together**

- Sitaram Yechury, a prominent leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), passed away at the age of 72.
- He was a versatile person who was both a Marxist thinker and a skilled communicator, able to explain complex ideas in simple terms.

- Yechury was born in Chennai on August 12, 1952, into a Telugu-speaking family. He grew up in Hyderabad before moving to Delhi during the Telangana agitation in 1969.
- He excelled in academics, earning a gold medal in economics from St. Stephen's College, Delhi.
- He chose to pursue his Master's at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) instead of the Delhi School of Economics, which shaped his future in politics.
- JNU's informal academic environment and interactions with professors influenced him, where even senior professors had casual relationships with students.
- His political career began at JNU, where he served as the President of the JNU Students' Union. He led protests that ultimately pressured Indira Gandhi to resign as the Chancellor of JNU.
- During the protests, the university was ordered to close, but Yechury and the students, with the faculty's support, kept it running for 40 days.
- To fund the university during the protest, students went to markets like Sarojini Nagar and Connaught Place to collect donations.
- After Indira Gandhi lost the Lok Sabha election, Yechury and the students demanded her resignation as JNU Chancellor, leading a march to her house.
- Sitaram Yechury, during his student leadership, led a protest with 500 students against Indira Gandhi, demanding her resignation as JNU Chancellor.
- Indira Gandhi personally came out to meet the students and, after hearing their resolution, resigned a few days later.
- A famous photo captures this moment of Yechury handing over the resolution to Indira Gandhi.
- Yechury, alongside Prakash Karat, played a key role in establishing JNU as a Left stronghold.
- He became the first president of the Students' Federation of India (SFI) from outside Kerala or Bengal.
- Yechury was promoted quickly in the CPI(M), joining the Central Committee at age 32 and the Polit Bureau at age 40, despite never leading a district or state unit.
- He was elected as the party's general secretary in 2015 and served three terms.
- From 2005 to 2017, Yechury was a member of the Rajya Sabha, known for his sharp political speeches laced with humor and wit.
- He played a key role in forming coalition governments, including the United Front in 1996 and the UPA governments in 2004 and 2009.
- He helped unite opposition parties for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2023 formation of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).
- Yechury, known for his coalition-building, forged an electoral alliance with Congress in West Bengal, breaking the CPI(M)'s long-standing anti-Congress stance.
- He invoked the idea of "March separately but strike together," promoting the pooling of all anti-BJP votes.

## Marxist-Leninist, critic of identity-based politics

- Sitaram Yechury was known for being a flexible politician, skilled in forming alliances, but within the CPI(M), he was seen as loyal to Marxist-Leninist principles.
- He focused on issues related to the economy, livelihood, and social realities to ensure his party's voice was heard, even when the party's electoral performance was poor.
- He was strongly anti-imperialist, influenced by Marxist leaders like P. Sundaraiah, M. Basavapunniah, and E.M.S. Namboodiripad.
- Yechury opposed foreign-funded NGOs, believing they advanced imperialist agendas and disrupted progressive mass movements. He advocated bringing corporate houses and NGOs under the Lokpal's oversight.
- He was critical of identity-based political groups, arguing that focusing only on caste without addressing deeper structural issues didn't provide real solutions.
- Yechury was instrumental in crafting a key CPI(M) document in 1992, "On Certain Ideological Issues," which helped the party strengthen its position after the collapse of other Communist parties following the fall of the USSR.
- This document stressed the need for the working class to be led by a Marxist-Leninist party for revolutionary change, and Yechury presented it at the CPI(M)'s 14th Congress in 1992.
- He proposed amendments to the party's political strategy before the 21st Party Congress in 2014, where he was elected general secretary, calling it the "Party Congress of the future."

## Doval meets Putin, Wang in dual diplomatic mission

### NSA briefs Russian President on Modi's visit to Ukraine; in talks with Chinese Foreign Minister, both sides agreed to work with urgency and redouble their efforts to realise disengagement at LAC

- National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during the BRICS NSAs meeting in Saint Petersburg.
- Doval discussed the Russia-Ukraine conflict and military disengagement along the India-China border (Line of Actual Control, LAC) with urgency.

- He informed President Putin about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Kyiv and meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on August 23.
- Doval conveyed India's role in peace efforts, with Modi and Zelenskyy expected to meet again at the UN Summit later this month.
- President Putin thanked India for maintaining security dialogue and proposed a meeting with Modi during the BRICS Summit in Kazan on October 22-24.
- Doval also met China's top diplomat Wang Yi to discuss the four-year military standoff at the LAC.
- Both sides agreed to work urgently toward complete disengagement in the remaining areas of the border and emphasized that peace and respect for the LAC are essential for normalizing bilateral relations.
- They acknowledged the importance of India-China relations for both countries, the region, and the world.

## 'Alleged involvement in crime not a reason to bulldoze property'

- The Supreme Court ruled that being involved in a crime is not a reason to demolish someone's property.
- A Bench, led by Justice Hrishikesh Roy, warned that demolishing properties under such grounds could be seen as violating the laws of the country.
- The case was brought up by Javed Ali, whose family home in Gujarat was under threat of demolition due to a family member being involved in a crime.
- His family had lived in the house for over two decades, and the municipal authorities threatened to bulldoze it after an FIR was filed against a relative.
- The court stressed that actions by the government should follow the rule of law, and one family member's actions should not lead to the demolition of the entire family's legally constructed home.
- The court ordered that the property should not be touched, maintaining "status quo" regarding the demolition threat.

## Panic in the time of cholera: issues critical to managing a resurgence

**Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal disease caused by the ingestion of water or food contaminated with *Vibrio cholerae*. It can cause severe diarrhoea, vomiting, and weakness. People with low immunity, such as malnourished children and people living with HIV/AIDS, are at greater risk of death**

- Climate change is damaging health globally, but simple issues like clean water, hygiene, and sanitation often get overlooked.
- Cholera, an acute diarrhoeal disease caused by contaminated water or food, is a major concern exacerbated by climate change.
- Cholera leads to severe diarrhea, vomiting, leg cramps, and weakness. People with low immunity, such as malnourished children and those with HIV/AIDS, are at higher risk of death.
- The disease spreads through contaminated food, water, and contact with infected individuals. The main symptom is severe watery diarrhea, which can cause rapid dehydration and death if untreated.
- Unicef reports that 2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and 3.6 billion lack proper sanitation.
- Cholera deaths increased by 17% and cases by 13% last year. In 2023, 4,000 people died from cholera, a preventable and treatable disease.
- In 2024, 22 countries are reporting active cholera outbreaks. From January to July 2024, 5,052 cases were reported in four South-East Asian countries: India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
- As of August 22, 2,400 deaths from cholera have been reported globally.
- Dr. Tedros highlighted that factors like conflict, climate change, unsafe water, poor sanitation, poverty, and displacement increased cholera outbreaks last year.
- Cholera cases have shifted geographically, with a decrease in the Middle East and Asia, but a significant rise in Africa, revealing existing health care inequities.
- There is a severe shortage of cholera vaccines. More doses were requested between 2021 and 2023 than in the previous decade. Last year, only half of the requested doses were produced.
- Due to the shortage, a single-dose vaccination strategy has been adopted instead of the standard two doses to protect more people.
- Currently, there is only one cholera vaccine manufacturer. Dr. Tedros urged other manufacturers to start producing vaccines and offer them at affordable prices.
- While vaccination is crucial, Dr. Tedros emphasized that safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene are the only sustainable solutions for ending and preventing cholera outbreaks.
- Climate change impacts the spread of cholera. Floods can overflow latrines into water sources, and droughts can increase the concentration of cholera bacteria in shrinking water sources.
- The rise in cholera cases is linked to conflicts, climate change, under-investment in development, and population displacement. Sustainable development goals, particularly those related to safe drinking water and sanitation, are not being met, failing to fulfill the UN's 2010 declaration of these as fundamental rights.

- The Global Task Force for Cholera Control (GTFCC) developed a plan called the 'Global Roadmap for Ending Cholera by 2030'. This plan focuses on various actions like identifying disease transmission, reporting to government agencies, educating communities about hygiene, improving sanitation, and conducting oral cholera vaccine (OCV) campaigns in high-risk areas.
- In May this year, seven countries and ten major health organizations joined forces at the World Health Assembly to address the cholera emergency. Partners included the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNICEF, and WHO.
- The emphasis was on the need for sustainable funding to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene services, enhance disease surveillance in cholera-prone areas, and increase local production of cholera vaccines.
- IFRC Secretary General Jagan Chapagain highlighted the urgent need to prevent cholera deaths with existing tools and urged for more focus and investment in cholera control.
- The success of these efforts depends on securing adequate investments and convincing local governments to spend on clean water, hygiene, and sanitation. Governments also need to recognize and address the impact of climate change on cholera outbreaks.

## Doctor fights firms peddling 'sugary' ORSL packs as ORS

- Diarrhoea is the third leading cause of childhood death in India, responsible for 13% of deaths among children under five.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a specific oral rehydration solution (ORS) to effectively rehydrate children during diarrhoea.
- Many pharmacies in India mistakenly give ORSL, a high-sugar electrolyte drink, instead of the WHO-recommended ORS.
- Dr. Sivaranjani Santosh, a paediatrician from Hyderabad, has been campaigning against ORSL, which she says is not suitable for rehydration because it contains too much sugar.
- Dr. Sivaranjani discovered that ORSL, despite being marketed as ORS, worsens diarrhoea due to its high sugar content and minimal extra sodium.
- She has raised awareness through workshops, social media, and media outlets.
- In April 2023, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) ordered a stop to the mislabelling of ORSL but allowed the term "ORS" with a disclaimer. Some manufacturers now include a small disclaimer stating "Do not use during diarrhoea," but it's often overlooked.
- Pharmacists prefer selling ORSL because it is more profitable, being twice as expensive as standard ORS solutions.
- Dr. Sivaranjani filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in 2022, asking the Telangana High Court to remove "ORS" from ORSL's name.
- In response to the PIL, companies promoted the term "silent dehydration," which is not recognized in medical literature, to defend ORSL.
- Dr. Sivaranjani seeks support from paediatricians and doctors' associations in India to address the issue.

## Putting the brakes on 'bulldozer justice' (13 September)

- The Supreme Court of India has sought suggestions from concerned parties to create national guidelines on demolitions done without legal basis.
- This order is due to several cases where homes and buildings of people accused of crimes were demolished without following proper legal procedures.
- These demolitions, often targeting vulnerable groups, have left people without legal options to defend their rights.
- Such actions have made the right to housing meaningless, as evictions are done by local authorities without proper notice or offering alternative housing.
- These demolitions increase inequality, social conflict, and marginalization, especially of certain communities, going against constitutional values and due legal process.
- There is a strong need for new guidelines and a legal framework to prevent authorities from using unchecked power to demolish homes and establishments.
- Large-scale demolitions as collective punishment, like those in Delhi, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh, are becoming more common and are often justified under municipal laws related to encroachment or unauthorized construction.
- These actions ignore Supreme Court and High Court rulings that require due process before such demolitions.
- This "tough on crime" approach by some state governments is politically motivated and violates fundamental rights.
- The Supreme Court should place a complete ban on demolitions used as punishment and create strict guidelines to ensure fair procedures are followed in legitimate cases of demolition.

### Due process in legitimate demolitions

- The displacement of people due to demolitions has been a long-standing concern.
- The United Nations guidelines (2019) recommend addressing demolitions from a humanitarian viewpoint.

- Courts in India have dealt with demolition cases individually, but these efforts have often resulted in temporary solutions.
- The Supreme Court is now tasked with creating national guidelines for demolitions that take into account multiple factors.
- Demolitions should happen only in exceptional cases and must follow the due process of law.
- The law should clearly define the types of buildings that can be demolished and the conditions under which demolitions can occur.
- It is important to balance state actions with people's rights to adequate housing and resettlement.
- Data on recent demolitions should be analyzed to understand patterns and identify gaps in the process.
- Procedural guidelines should be created, with several checkpoints to ensure fairness before any demolition.
- In the pre-demolition phase, the burden of proof should be on the authorities to justify why demolition is necessary and how human rights are protected.
- Authorities must issue a clear notice for demolition, including details about land records and resettlement plans, giving affected individuals enough time to respond and seek legal help.
- An independent committee with judicial and civil society members should review demolition plans, especially for large-scale demolitions, and assist affected people in understanding their rights.
- Discussions on alternative housing and compensation must involve those affected, and vulnerable groups (children, elderly, disabled) should receive special attention.
- A minimum of one month's notice should be given before the demolition to allow affected individuals time to retrieve their belongings.
- During the demolition phase, the use of physical force should be minimized.
- Heavy machinery like bulldozers should be avoided during evictions.
- Government officials who are not part of the demolition authority must be present to oversee the process.
- The timing of the demolition should be fixed in advance, and surprise demolitions should result in punitive action against the responsible authorities.
- In the rehabilitation phase, proper temporary or permanent housing must be provided to prevent homelessness.
- A fast grievance redress system should be created to allow affected persons to challenge decisions made at any stage.
- The law should include remedies like compensation, restitution, or the option to return to the original home.
- Many demolitions across India violate due process and ignore court rulings.
- Municipal laws often protect officials from legal action by including "good faith" clauses, giving them impunity for demolitions.
- While nationwide guidelines are a positive step, law enforcement needs to be educated on following existing rules.
- Personal liability for those ordering unlawful evictions and demolitions should be considered to maintain checks on official power.

## Health care using AI is bold, but much caution first (13 September)

- The idea of providing a free AI-powered primary-care physician for every Indian within five years sounds promising but raises concerns about feasibility, sustainability, and India's readiness.
- Primary health care (PHC) focuses on bringing health services closer to communities and empowering people to manage their health.
- Relying on AI for primary health care might weaken PHC because AI is impersonal and could make people passive in their own health care.
- AI is good at handling repetitive tasks but lacks key aspects of human intelligence, like understanding complex information, reasoning, and planning, which are essential for medical care.
- Health care requires empathy, cultural understanding, and ethical decision-making, which AI cannot replicate because it lacks consciousness.
- Medical data is often scattered and incomplete, making it hard to train AI models effectively.
- An example from obstetrics, Naegele's rule, has been used for over 200 years to predict childbirth but is outdated and inaccurate, highlighting the limitations of simple models in health care.
- Creating better AI models requires large amounts of personal data, but this raises privacy and ethical concerns.
- The costs of building infrastructure to collect and train this data are high, and AI models will need constant updates as health trends change, leading to ongoing expenses.
- India's diversity adds more complexity, as AI models need a large amount of personal and contextualized data, which can be difficult to gather and standardize across the population.

### AI's utility in health care

- AI can be helpful in specific health care tasks like predicting hospital supply needs, managing medical waste, and optimizing drug procurement.

- AI models, like diffusion models, can be used to predict patterns in complex medical data, such as screening medical images or pathology slides.
- Large Language Models (LLMs) and Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) are valuable tools in medical education, providing quick access to medical knowledge and simulating patient interactions for training.
- A major problem with AI in health care is the "black box" issue, where it is unclear how AI reaches its decisions, making it difficult to trust or rely on the results in critical medical situations.
- The stakes are high in health care compared to areas like gaming, where mistakes made by AI could lead to serious health consequences.
- Ethical concerns about AI development, like the exploitation of workers (as seen in Kenya with ChatGPT moderators), raise the need for safeguarding patient data in India.
- India lacks specific laws governing AI, unlike the European Union's AI Act, which makes it essential to develop ethical regulations for AI in health care.
- While AI promises efficiency and fewer errors in health care, it requires huge investments in research, data infrastructure, and constant updates.
- India must first solve its foundational health system problems before fully integrating AI, ensuring the quality of data and considering ethical concerns.

## Good, but not enough (13 September)

### Free health coverage to all over 70 years is good, but more needs to be done

- The government extended the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) to cover senior citizens over 70, regardless of income, benefiting around 60 million people.
- This move provides free health coverage up to ₹0.5 million per year for this population, but it does not fully meet public health needs.
- The scheme covers only hospitalisation for secondary and tertiary care but does not include outpatient care, diagnostics, or medicines.
- Many elderly people suffer from multiple chronic diseases, and most of their health costs (40%-80%) come from outpatient care, which the scheme does not cover.
- Since its 2018 launch, PM-JAY has had limited reach in smaller cities and towns, with better penetration only in southern states.
- In many regions, public primary and secondary health care is inadequate, causing an increased load on tertiary hospitals.
- Thailand successfully built up its primary health care system to achieve universal health coverage, while the U.S. reliance on insurance schemes led to high health care costs.
- Two-thirds of the money spent under PM-JAY has gone to private hospitals, especially in southern states.
- If primary and secondary health care remains weak, private hospitals will benefit, and the government may further reduce its commitment to strengthen public health care.
- In its current form, PM-JAY is necessary but incomplete, as it does not fully address health care needs for the elderly.

## Street power (13 September)

### The Kolkata protest must keep its focus and not be a free-for-all

- Protests in Kolkata erupted after a woman doctor was brutally raped and murdered on August 9.
- Junior doctors and civil society are demanding justice, with a focus on five key demands.
- Doctors have refused to return to work despite the Supreme Court's request, asking for a televised meeting with the State administration.
- The Mamata Banerjee government rejected the doctors' pre-conditions and urged them to resume work.
- The doctors' demands include identifying and punishing the culprits, taking disciplinary action against a former principal, and the resignation of the Kolkata Police Commissioner.
- They are also asking for increased security for health workers and an end to the "threat culture" in hospitals and medical colleges in West Bengal.
- The government launched an initiative called 'Rattirer Shaathi' to protect health workers, but it is seen as a token gesture.
- The Court directed the government to improve health infrastructure, including duty rooms, toilets, and CCTVs, highlighting the poor state of facilities.
- The doctors could consider a relay strike so that patient care continues while protests go on.
- West Bengal is a poor state, and the ongoing strikes have affected vulnerable populations, with six lakh patients reportedly turned away from hospitals.
- Doctors claim they are still offering telemedicine services and Sunday clinics, and senior doctors are working to keep things running.
- With the festival season approaching, it is crucial for the government and doctors to resolve the crisis quickly.

## Is it time for India to introduce a Universal Basic Income? (13 September)

- **Jobless Growth:** Many countries are experiencing growth in output and productivity without creating enough jobs.
- **Universal Basic Income (UBI):** UBI is a proposed solution where everyone receives a basic income regularly to cover their needs, regardless of their employment status.
- **Current Context:** The International Labour Organization (ILO) links reduced job growth and increased inequality to automation and AI.
- **In India:** There's debate about whether India should introduce UBI.
- **N.R. Bhanumurthy's View:**
  - India already has cash transfer schemes that function similarly to UBI for specific groups, like farmers, women, and unemployed youth.
  - These schemes provide some basic support but aren't universal.
  - Bhanumurthy is unsure if a full UBI is necessary or feasible in India.
- **Arun Kumar's View:**
  - UBI discussions have been ongoing since 2015.
  - The main issue driving the UBI discussion is the lack of market demand due to unemployment.
  - When people are unemployed or underpaid, they spend less, which slows down economic growth.
- **Generating Demand:** To boost demand, we need to increase incomes for people without jobs. UBI is one idea to achieve this.
- **Capitalist Philosophy:** In capitalism, people are paid for work done, not for not working. This system struggles to provide enough jobs and incomes.
- **Historical Context:** In the 1980s, the World Bank suggested creating safety nets for people falling behind. India tried this in the 2000s with various rights and safety nets.
- **Work and Dignity:** Simply giving money without work can lead to a lack of dignity and social division. Providing work is important to prevent alienation and social problems.
- **Employment Generation:** The key to solving these issues is creating more jobs. Policies need to be better structured to generate employment.
- **Current Situation:** The rise in digital industries and automation (like AI) is reducing traditional job opportunities.
- **Government Actions:**
  - Investment is increasing but mainly in sectors that don't create many jobs, like infrastructure and power.
  - There have been cuts in spending on labor-intensive sectors like education, health, and rural employment programs.
- **Employment in Construction:** Modern construction uses fewer workers due to machines, reducing job creation despite efficiency improvements.
- **Banking Sector Changes:** Automation and digital banking have reduced the need for bank staff, highlighting the impact of technology on employment.
- **Trade Sector Impact:** E-commerce has been growing quickly, affecting traditional neighborhood stores and leading to job losses in the trade sector.
- **Job-Loss Growth:** People displaced by job losses often turn to self-employment, often at low income levels. This phenomenon is linked to the idea of UBI.
- **NR Bhanumurthy's View:**
  - Unemployment is a serious issue globally, including in India.
  - The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (housing scheme) has positively impacted employment and demand in sectors like steel and cement.
  - The government aims to provide more employment opportunities alongside growth.
  - While wage growth is slower compared to profit growth, there are some improvements in wages.
  - There's a need to reassess production-linked incentives in the manufacturing sector post-COVID-19.
  - The ILO suggests potential future impacts of AI on jobs but doesn't claim current job-loss growth.
  - There's a mismatch between the skills people have and the skills needed.
  - Education and Skills: Improving education and skill training is important to address job market changes and income inequality.
- **UBI Debate:**
  - NR Bhanumurthy believes India should focus on strengthening existing social safety nets rather than implementing a full UBI.
  - AK argues that increasing direct taxes could help bridge the income gap, suggesting political will is needed to raise the direct tax-to-GDP ratio, which is currently low in India compared to developed countries.

## What does dissolution of SCoS entail? (13 September)

**Why was the SCoS dissolved? What are the main roles of the new Steering Committee? How do the SCoS and the Steering Committee differ? How does the SCoS' s dissolution impact statistical data quality? How will the new committee address the data gaps? What issues have arisen from the delay in the census?**

- **Dissolution of SCoS:** The Union Ministry of Statistics dissolved the 14-member Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS), led by Pronab Sen, due to overlapping functions with the Steering Committee for National Sample Surveys.
- **Reason for Dissolution:** SCoS's work was seen as overlapping with the Steering Committee's, and the SCoS members were not given a specific reason for the dissolution.
- **Key Responsibilities of SCoS:**
  - Advised on survey methodology, including sampling design, instruments, and questions.
  - Finalized the tabulation plan for surveys.
  - Reviewed existing frameworks and addressed issues related to surveys.
  - Provided guidance on pilot surveys, data gaps, and technical aspects of surveys.
- **Role of the New Committee:**
  - The Steering Committee has 17 members and one non-member secretary, including four experts from the dissolved SCoS.
  - Its responsibilities are similar to SCoS, including reviewing survey results, methodology, and advising on survey methodology.
  - The Steering Committee will have a tenure of two years and will finalize survey tabulation plans.
- **Pressure for New Census:**
  - Academics and policymakers want a new census due to outdated data.
  - Lack of fresh data affects access to schemes like the National Food Security Act.
  - There are doubts about the accuracy of employment and unemployment figures.
  - The Census provides detailed state and sub-district data on education and employment.
- **Flaws in Administrative Data:**
  - Claims that administrative data (from EPFO, ESIC, and RBI) show a positive employment scenario are questioned.
  - Administrative data can be biased and may reflect government perspectives rather than actual conditions.
  - There is a risk of manipulation and limitations in the analytical quality of administrative data.
  - Surveys like the PLFS do not provide detailed state or district-level data and may have urban bias, whereas the Census offers comprehensive coverage.
- **Urgency of Next Census:**
  - The decennial census has been conducted every ten years since the 1870s, with the last one in 2011.
  - The 2021 census was delayed due to COVID-19, and there is no updated schedule for the next census.
  - Economists and policymakers stress that continuing to use 2011 data is problematic for decision-making.
  - There is a call to conduct the next census as soon as possible to get current data.

## What role does CSTT play in standardising technical terms? (13 September)

**What is the 'Shabd' glossary platform? How many terms are available on the portal?**

- **Government Initiative:**
  - To improve education and understanding in Indian languages, the government is introducing technical education (engineering and medicine) in these languages.
  - AICTE has started a project to translate and write technical books in 12 Indian languages.
  - One set of these books will be provided to libraries at degree and diploma institutions.
  - CSTT has launched a website offering technical terms in all 22 official Indian languages.
- **CSTT Overview:**
  - CSTT was established on October 1, 1961.
  - It standardizes scientific and technical terminology in Indian languages.
  - Publishes bilingual, trilingual, and multilingual glossaries and dictionaries.
  - Also publishes journals and university-level textbooks through various publication cells.
  - Organizes events to promote the use of standardized terminology.

- **New Website: “Shabd”:**
  - The website is hosted at ‘https://shabd.education.gov.in’.
  - It provides a digital searchable database of CSTT glossaries.
  - Other institutions can also add their dictionaries to this platform.
  - Users can search for terms by language, subject, and dictionary type and provide feedback.
- **Collating Words:**
  - Terminologies are prepared by Expert Advisory Committees with subject and language experts.
  - These terms are used in textbooks and by institutions like NTA, NCERT, and AICTE.
  - The website features terms from CSTT's various published dictionaries and glossaries.
- **Portal Details:**
  - Launched in March this year.
  - It has received 136,968 hits.
  - Contains around 21,84,050 headwords from 322 glossaries.
  - Covers over 60 subjects, including humanities, medical sciences, engineering, agriculture, and more.
- **Future Plans:**
  - Prof. Girish Nath Jha of CSTT hopes to use AI and digital technologies to advance the initiative further.

## Industrial output grew 4.8% in July (13 September)

**In absolute terms, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) slipped to a three-month low; manufacturing output growth quickened to 4.6% last month, from June’s 3.2%, making it the only broad segment in the IIP to clock a sequential uptick**

- India’s industrial output grew by 4.8% in July, which was one of the slowest rates for FY25 so far.
- In June, the industrial output grew by 4.7%, meaning July’s growth was only slightly better.
- Mining and electricity growth slowed, and non-consumer durables’ output (like everyday goods) decreased sharply by 4.4%, marking the third drop in four months.
- Overall, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) was at a three-month low in July, with output dropping 0.73% compared to June.
- Manufacturing saw a slight improvement, growing by 4.6% in July compared to 3.2% in June, though the increase was only 1.6% compared to June.
- Mining grew by just 3.7%, much lower than the 10.3% rise seen in June. Electricity growth also slowed to 7.9%, down from 8.6% in June.
- On an end-use basis, four sectors saw a slowdown in growth compared to June’s numbers.
- Capital goods output (like machinery) grew the fastest at 12%, a big jump from 3.8% in June. Intermediate goods (used to make other products) rose by 6.8%, more than double the 3% rise in June.
- Primary goods growth slowed slightly to 5.9% from 6.3%, while infrastructure and construction goods grew by 4.9%, lower than the 7.1% rise in June.
- Consumer trends were mixed: consumer durables (like electronics and appliances) grew by 8.2% compared to last August, but non-durables (like food and daily items) fell by 4.4%, following a 1.5% drop in June.
- Non-durable goods output was the second-lowest in nine months, and durable goods production was at a three-month low.
- In the first four months of FY25, non-durable goods output contracted by 1.5%, while durable goods output grew by 10%.
- Overall industrial output grew by 5.2% between April and July, slightly higher than the 5.1% growth in the same period last year.