



नीति आयोग
NITI AAYOG



DOCPLAN- MAY 2026

Compiled By:

Dr. Kumar Sanjay, Director (Library)

Smt. Indira Rani, LIO

Mr. Raj Kumar, LIA

NITI AAYOG
LIBRARY

CONTENTS

Sl.No.	Titles	Page No.
1.	AGRICULTURE	1
2.	ECONOMICS	1-2
3.	EDUCATION	4-6
4.	ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY	7-8
5.	FINANCE/BANKING	9
6.	HEALTH	10
7.	LAW AND SOCIETY	10-13
8.	SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	14
9.	RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT	15
10.	WATER RESOURCES	15-17

AGRICULTURE

1. [Agriculture and Rural in the Union Budget](#)

Sukhpal Singh

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026

The union budget is an annual exercise, but it gives a sense of direction for policy in terms of emphasising or moving away from certain schemes and programmes, especially in a sector like agriculture, as it is highly heterogeneous across India and faces many challenges from multiple sustainability challenges. More recently, the agricultural sector has performed better than in the past in terms of the growth rate. This article examines the allocations of the Union Budget 2026–27 for the agricultural and rural sectors in terms of both changing focus (from subsidies to investments, and from production to market support) as well as reasons for higher or lower allocations, as seen through the utilisation pattern of such allocations over the years and in the previous year. The Indian agricultural sector has moved from its low-growth trajectory of an average annual growth rate of below 3% to growing at 4.43% per annum during 2015–24. Further, the shares of livestock and fishery sectors in agricultural gross value added (GVA) have grown from 22.86% to 30.77% and 5.17% to 7.44%, respectively, during the same period, as they have achieved even higher growth rates of the order of 7% and 9% per annum, respectively.

ECONOMICS

2. [An Economic Perspective on Religion in India](#)

Mohd Arshid

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

In both past and present, religion impinges on every input into the macroeconomic production function. Although many studies connecting religion and growth focus on narrow events, eras, and locations, the cumulative evidence from these studies is clear: religion matters for economic growth. How, when, and where it matters is context-specific, but economists disregard religion at their peril (Becker et al 2024). There are two primary approaches to studying the economics of religion. The first involves an examination of the relationship between religion and the economy. This approach investigates the impact religion has on various economic factors, such as productivity, investment, education, labour, and physical

and human capital. It looks at how religious beliefs, practices, and institutions can influence individual and societal behaviour, which in turn affects economic performance. For example, scholars may explore how religious values shape work ethics, spending habits, or community cooperation, all of which contribute to economic outcomes.

3. [Budget 2026–27 and Coping with the Emerging Economic Challenge](#)

[Sudipto Mundle, Ajaya Sahu](#)

[EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026](#)

Stable fiscal ratios, high growth and low inflation portray India as a haven of stability and calm in a very turbulent world. However, this may well be a calm before the storm. The stable fiscal ratios notwithstanding, fiscal space is shrinking, which handicaps the country in coping with the economic shock, which is expected in the wake of the Iran war and Iran's chokehold on supplies through the Strait of Hormuz. An expansionary fiscal policy, combined with a tight monetary policy stance, can moderate the impact of the shock, but a period of slower growth and elevated inflation seems unavoidable. The war unleashed on Iran by the United States (US)–Israel alliance is still raging at the time of writing this article, while the Ukraine war continues unabated and wars are also being fought in Africa and elsewhere. The geopolitical order established by the US and its allies is being torn down, ironically by the US itself, while the contours of any emerging new order remain unclear. The uncertainty of this geopolitical transformation has been added to the rapid technological transformation of the way the world lives and works, led by artificial intelligence, the biochemical revolution and climate change. We have not seen such an extreme level of uncertainty since World War II. Does the 2026–27 budget allow fiscal space to cope with the economic consequences of such uncertainties as they unfold? Before addressing this grand question, it is necessary to first address two specific domestic developments which have significant fiscal implications.

4. [Tax Mobilisation Strategies](#)

[A Athira, Vishnu K Ramesh](#)

[EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026](#)

Despite steady growth in gross tax revenues, the tax to GDP ratio has remained largely stagnant. The composition of tax revenue has shifted towards direct taxes, indicating a gradual move towards a more progressive system. Key reforms in direct and indirect taxation,

including corporate tax rationalisation, changes in share buyback taxation, expansion of the personal income tax regime, measures to simplify GST and customs procedures through greater digitalisation, and specifically the Income Tax Act, 2025 improve efficiency, structural challenges persist. These include a narrow tax base and limited tax buoyancy, requiring continued reforms in tax design and administration. India, despite being one of the world's fastest-growing economies, continues to grapple with a relatively low tax-to-GDP ratio of around 11%–12% (MoF 2025), significantly below the global average of approximately 17.5% (IMF 2026). This underscores the need to strengthen tax mobilisation as a foundation for sustainable development. The Union Budget 2026–27, anchored in the vision of *Viksit Bharat*, sets a gross tax revenue target of ₹44,04,086 crore to finance a total expenditure of ₹53,47,315 crore—representing a 7.7% increase over the revised estimates for 2025–26.

5. [Industrial Growth and Environmental Degradation](#)

Nivaj Gogoi, Farah Hussain

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between industrial growth and environmental degradation, with reference to the environmental Kuznets curve hypothesis, in the context of the Indian core industries. Both the traditional inverted U-shaped and the contemporary N-shaped industrial EKC have been empirically tested to understand the long-term environmental impact of the core industries' growth. The findings indicate that even though the core industries' growth is expected to help momentarily improve environmental quality for a duration, failing to emphasise the innovation of industrial products and processes can cause further ecological imbalance in the long run. Industrialisation has become a critical economic and environmental issue for the world in recent decades. Developing countries have been prioritising industrialisation to establish stronger economies, while causing severe damage to their environmental conditions. Industries around the world have become a major source of pollution that has started affecting the global environmental well-being, too. Higher carbon emissions, sea-level rise, acidification of the oceans, extreme weather conditions, etc, are a few of the burning ecological issues that demand serious attention from mankind. International organisations have also started spreading awareness on these critical issues, appealing to the countries to take necessary steps to minimise such devastating environmental effects as soon as possible.

As per reports, an average of 1.1°C surge above the pre-industrial levels has been caused in the global temperature during 2011–20, primarily due to the greenhouse effect (World Meteorological Organization 2023). In the Paris Agreement 2015, the countries were asked to keep the temperature increase well below 1.5°C to ensure long-term global environmental health (IPCC 2019, 2021; United Nations 2015). Considering that, it is high time that countries adopt sustainable industrial practices for the safe survival of all living beings.

EDUCATION

6. [Education and Inequality in India's Changing Urban Landscapes](#)

Geeta Thatra

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026

Shifting Landscapes: Education and Urban Transformations in India, edited by Geetha B Nambissan, Nandini Manjrekar, Shivali Tukdeo, and Indra Sengupta, makes a timely intervention in debates on education and urbanisation in India. While both have long been regarded as the “pillars of modernisation” (p 6), as the editor’s note, the volume addresses a significant gap in scholarship by examining their “mutually constitutive relationship” (p 2). Framing Indian cities as sites of neo-liberal reconfiguration since the 1990s, the volume asks a salient question: How do education and the urban shape each other, and how does this relationship produces social exclusion?

Urban studies has largely focused on the making of urban spaces, migration, housing, infrastructure, and governance, while scholarship in education studies is centred on schooling, access, pedagogy, and curriculum. Rarely do these fields talk to each other. What makes Shifting Landscapes distinct is that it situates education within broader processes of urbanisation, arguing that cities do not merely host educational institutions but are also shaped by them. It offers insights into how urban and educational transformations are reciprocal, and educational inequalities in Indian cities are also spatial. The book’s most compelling insistence is that we cannot understand patterns of exclusion or aspirations for schooling without attending to the urban spaces that produce them.

7. [From 50 Years Ago: China: Struggle over Education](#)

Harish Chandola

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 15, 11 April, 2026

The Chaoyang Agricultural College was founded and expanded during the Cultural Revolution. Since then, over the past six years, it has been firmly carrying out Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, struggling against the revisionist line that had dominated education during the 17 years preceding the Cultural Revolution. Its aim is to be an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to its students, the right deviationists — who tried to blur the essential differences between the old education and the new — asserted that the formulation “fighting tit-for-tat against the revisionist line in education of the 17 years” is erroneous. Since this is a cardinal issue of right and wrong, the question must be thrashed out (1) Old agricultural colleges were dominated by bourgeois intellectuals; new agricultural colleges must strengthen working class leadership. Lacking a powerful contingent of worker-intellectuals to represent the proletariat during the 17 years before the Cultural Revolution, the schools were dominated by bourgeois intellectuals, whose influence went far beyond their numerical domination. As there was lack of clarity on the importance of all-round dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeois, including in the superstructure, some of the people sent to school by the Communist Party and the working class were either forced out or were turned into mouthpieces of the bourgeoisie. This enabled the bourgeoisie to exercise dictatorship over the proletariat in school.

8. [Migration, Social Identity, and Education](#)

Ayushi Basoya, Rama Pal

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 17, 25 April, 2026

The marginalised groups in rural areas opt to migrate to urban centres to elude the inherent social hierarchies. It is hoped that the caste- and religion-based segregations will dilute with urbanisation, making way for upward mobility. The findings of the present study indicate that significant disparity persists in urban India, with migrant households and marginalised groups consistently experiencing a lower quality of life. However, the triple interaction of migrant status, social background, and education helps in reversing some of the disparity, as higher education benefits the marginalised sections more than the non-marginalised. The findings suggest a need for more inclusive policies that address and enhance the housing and educational outcomes of marginalised populations. India, a culturally rich and diverse country, has witnessed rapid economic development in the last few decades. However, the growth witnessed in recent times has created a divide between rural and urban economies within the country (Kundu and Banerjee 2018; Bharathi et al 2021). In addition to the

economic backwardness, caste- and religion-based social and cultural norms are deep-rooted, especially in rural areas. The religious minorities and marginalised castes are often subjected to discrimination and experience a wide disparity in several domains of their livelihood, including, but not limited to, education, employment, and housing (Rajan et al 2023; Desai and Dubey 2012). Social exclusion then extends to spatial segregation as these groups are found to be concentrated in specific underdeveloped localities, leading to deprivation and disparity in rural areas (Zacharias and Vakulabharanam 2011).

10. [Between Assertion and Victimhood](#)

Balu Sunilraj, Prithiraj Borah

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

Focusing on the protests and debates against the recent University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, the article examines how upper-caste common sense manifests as both assertion and victimhood when caste-based policies challenge entrenched exclusions and hierarchies. Recent protests have displayed an unabashed upper-caste assertion in public space, not merely through claims of victimhood but also through open sloganeering such as *Brahmanvad Zindabad*. This marks a qualitative shift in upper-caste politics, one in which the earlier “cloaks of civility” appear to have been discarded. On 13 February 2026, outside the Maurice Nagar Police Station in Delhi, a crowd gathered in the name of justice. A viral video showed YouTuber Megha Lawariya raising a slogan rarely heard in the discursive space of “prestigious” public universities in India: *Brahmanvad Zindabad*—long live Brahminism. The occasion was a protest against the University Grants Commission (UGC) (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, notified on 13 January 2026 (Grover 2026). The slogan was neither an aberration nor a momentary lapse. It was the public articulation of a certain ideological politics long present but rarely declared so brazenly in public space—a politics that this article argues is constitutive of how upper-caste subjects understand, articulate, and defend their privileges in Indian academia.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

11. [Industrialising with a Dualistic Structure, Diverging Regional Patterns, and Environmental Challenges](#)

[Nagesh Kumar](#)

[EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026](#)

There has been an engaging debate in the country about the relevance of the manufacturing thrust for achieving the Vision 2047 of a developed and prosperous nation. The sceptics feel that, having missed the bus on a manufacturing-led development, India should stay focused on a services-led development strategy. However, manufacturing and services are not to be seen as competitors but complementary to each other (ISID 2025). Manufacturing-led transformation has been an important pathway to global prosperity, employed by developed countries, including the United States, Germany, and Japan, and by newly industrialised countries, namely the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and China alike. As India embarks on achieving its aspiration to become a developed country by 2047, the manufacturing sector seems to be an answer to creating decent jobs for its youthful population and fostering inclusive prosperity. India's structural transformation needs a vibrant manufacturing sector to complement its robustly growing services sector, pulling workers out of agriculture and other informal sector activities, and also anchoring balanced regional development. A failure to expand the manufacturing sector will mean India's growth will continue to remain jobless, with widening inequalities, and will be unsustainable. There is widespread recognition of the critical role of the manufacturing sector, which led the government to adopt the "Made in India" initiative, reinforced by Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India), covering policies like production-linked incentive (PLI), industrial corridors and other infrastructure, and ease-of-doing business, among other reforms to boost the manufacturing sector (Kumar 2024a, 2024b). There is also a realisation that high dependence on imports of manufactured goods can compromise the nation's strategic autonomy.

12. [New Solid Waste Management Rules 2026](#)

[Jawhar Cholakkathodi, Bikku](#)

[EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 17, 25 April, 2026](#)

The introduction of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2026 marks a significant milestone in India's waste management regulations. Replacing the SWM Rules of 2016 under

the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the new rules present a comprehensive response to the paradigmatic crisis of our time. According to data published by the Central Pollution Control Board (2023–24), about 1.85 lakh tonnes of solid waste are generated every day in India. Of this, only 1.79 lakh tonnes of waste are collected, and 1.14 lakh tonnes are processed or treated. The remaining 39,629 tonnes end up in landfills. The mounting prevalence of mixed and legacy waste, immense pressure on landfills, and weak enforcement of existing regulations, limited producer, and bulk waste generator (BWG) accountability, reflect the institutional and structural constraints of our waste governance ecosystem.

On 27 January 2026, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change notified the new SWM Rules 2026 which came into effect on 1 April 2026. These new rules considered waste management as a shared legal responsibility and extended their jurisdiction to rural local bodies. However, this expansion raises critical concerns about the institutional and infrastructural capacity of the rural local bodies. Without addressing the structural constraints on rural bodies, this deepens existing governance gaps rather than resolving them.

13. [Dynamics of the Long-Term Housing Yield: Evidence from Natural Experiments](#)

Verónica Bäcker-Peral, Jonathon Hazell, Atif Mian

AER; Vol. 116, NO. 3, March 2026

Each month, a fraction of UK property leases are extended by 90 years or more. We construct a new dataset using thousands of these natural experiments since 2000 and estimate the expected long-term housing yield. After remaining steady at around 5 percent, starts to decline when the Great Recession hits and reaches a low of 2.7 percent in 2024. The decline is steeper in inelastic markets, while remains higher in regions more exposed to long-run climate risk. Our estimate of is updated in real time using public data.

14. [The Value of Clean Water: Experimental Evidence from Rural India](#)

Fiona Burlig, Amir Jina, Anant Sudarshan

AER; Vol. 116, NO. 3, March 2026

Over 2 billion people lack clean drinking water. Existing solutions face high costs (piped water) or low demand (point-of-use chlorine). Using a 60,000 household cluster-randomized

experiment, we test an alternative approach: decentralized treatment and home delivery of clean water to the rural poor. At low prices, take-up exceeds 90 percent, sustained throughout the experiment. High prices reduce take-up but are privately profitable. We experimentally recover revealed-preference measures of valuation. Willingness-to-pay is several times higher than prior indirect estimates; willingness-to-accept is larger and exceeds marginal cost. Self-reported health measures improve accordingly. On a cost-per-DALY basis, free water delivery regimes appear highly cost effective.

FINANCE/BANKING

15. [Housing Inequality and Housing Asset Creation in Urban India](#)

Swastik Harish, Rasha Hasan Lala

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026

Using the All-India Debt and Investment Survey, 2019, the literature on housing inequality, and national- and state-level housing policies, this paper examines the prevalence of housing assets and the debts incurred to create the same, across asset-holding classes. Housing assets are central to household portfolios, even for low-income households operating in the absence of formal finance, derisking instruments, and clear land rights. There is a case for incremental financialisation of households to improve their housing quality, creditworthiness and reduce risk. Housing policy must be reconceived as a series of interconnected measures, and private partnerships can play an enabling role to account for growing household needs over time.

16. [From 50 Years Ago: Capitalist Development and Underdevelopment: Towards a Marxist Critique of Samir Amin](#)

Rohini Hensman

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

An understanding of the phenomenon of underdevelopment or backwardness and the solution of the problem cannot result from an analysis which disregards the whole of Marx's scientific achievement, and proposes solutions which run counter to the laws of development of human society. Rather, it is necessary to extend and concretise Marx's analysis using his own scientific method; to analyse the relations of production and laws of motion in societies which are either making the transition to capitalism or have stagnated in transition; to examine the precise way in which they are related to capital through the circulation process; to determine how the reproduction of capital on a world scale reproduces, creates, exaggerates

or diminishes unevenness in the geographical distribution of the productive forces through such mechanisms as, for example, the effect of national boundaries on the equalisation of the rate of profit; and so on. It is only by extending Marx's analysis of capital in this way that we can arrive at an understanding of accumulation on a world scale which is not pure fantasy, in the sense that it is confined to the sphere of superficial appearances which Marx referred to as "fantastic". Between Amin's conception of accumulation on a world scale and a Marxist conception based on an analysis which "touches the true relation of things, the same difference holds that holds in respect to all phenomena and their hidden substratum.

17. [Formal Credit and Persistent Constraints](#)

Mohd Shadab Danish, N R Bhanu Murthy

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

Access to finance remains a central concern in developing economies, such as India, where resource gaps constrain economic activity. Using World Bank Enterprise Surveys (2014, 2022), this paper examines institutional credit access among Indian small and medium enterprises. Generalised estimating equations logit estimates show no significant improvement over time; firms in 2022 were about 12 percentage points less likely to access credit than in 2014. Female-managed firms, exporters, and SMEs exhibit higher access, while micro-firms remain excluded. Women-led firms report borrowing costs as a key constraint. The findings highlight a dual challenge: expanding credit access and reducing transaction and compliance burdens.

18. [The Economic Fallout of War and Macroeconomic Stability](#)

Pinaki Chakraborty, Resham Nagpal

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026

The economic fallout of war in Iran on the Indian economy can derail fiscal consolidation, increase debt, and reduce fiscal space for discretionary development spending. As we move to the new fiscal year, ensuring fiscal sustainability and the stability of inflation will emerge as key challenges in macroeconomic management. Given the economic uncertainty the war has imposed, the 2026–27 budget numbers are, at best, indicative.

HEALTH

19. [Making Bricks from Straw: Resources and Productivity in Health Care](#)

Edward N. Okeke

AER; Vol. 116, NO. 4, April 2026

Why do health facilities in developing countries do so poorly? This paper examines the role of financial constraints. I describe an experiment in which we surprised health workers in randomly selected public health clinics in Nigeria with a ₦600,000 grant paid out in installments over one year. Its administration was left entirely to health workers. The award led to large productivity gains. Using expenditure data combined with novel textual data, I provide an explanation for these effects. I show the award increased investments in physical and human capital, led to lower prices for patients, and inspired health workers to do better.

LAW AND SOCIETY

20. [Towards Restoring Justice](#)

Anjali Mathur

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

Violence, in the form of terror offences, has become a persistent threat to the security of the world today. The state in India has sought to devise laws that can effectively curb such threats. However, in pursuit of this objective, many who are falsely incarcerated not only suffer from long periods of confinement in prisons but also experience a long term, debilitating impact on their lives, making reintegration into society extremely difficult. The exceptional provisions in these laws as well as the lack of a solid blueprint on the rehabilitation of such prisoners, result in a travesty of justice and human suffering that is ignored. This article explores the ways in which the rehabilitation of vulnerable undertrials could be centred in the legal discourse and practice to restore some sense of justice and human rights in our society.

21. [Intimate Revolts](#)

Caste, Gender, and the Politics of Loving Otherwise

Kiran Das

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026

The book under review repositions love not as sentiment but as structural critique, exposing how caste infiltrates the most private chambers of the heart. *Love in the Time of Caste: A Dalit-feminist Anthology of Love Stories*, edited and translated from Hindi by Nikhil Pandhi, is a crucial intervention in the affective politics of caste. It argues that the anthology repositions love not as private sentiment but as structural critique, exposing how caste regulates intimacy, sexuality, marriage, and reproduction. Across narratives of sexual violence, urban meritocracy, intra-Dalit tensions, reproductive labour, disability and inter-caste desire, the collection demonstrates that caste persists as an affective regime embedded within everyday relationships. Anchored in Ambedkarite ethics—*maitri* (compassion), dignity and equality—the stories challenge savarna assumptions that confine Dalit writing to testimonial suffering, instead foregrounding intimacy as a site of agency, refusal and insurgent self-respect. By unsettling both bourgeois romanticism and liberal claims of casteless modernity, the anthology imagines anti-caste futurities without erasing the sedimented violence of the present. The postscript contends that the annihilation of caste demands not only juridical reform or economic redistribution but an affective reorientation—transforming how desire is imagined and how love is lived within a society structured by graded inequality.

22. [Right to Clothing and the Clothing Crisis during the Bengal Famine of 1943–44](#)

Toru Matsumoto

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 15, 11 April, 2026

Clothing is a basic need for human development. Although the right to clothing is recognised as a human right, violations have occurred. This historical study examines the possibility of future shortages by analysing a past clothing crisis. During World War II, British India faced the Bengal famine of 1943–44 and a parallel “cloth famine.” Starving homeless people were forced to remain half-naked during a relatively harsh winter. The crisis stemmed from military priorities in textiles, halted Japanese imports, and rising Indian exports, showing clothing scarcity can reappear in wartime conditions.

23. [Fiscal Consolidation and Federalism](#)

Lekha Chakraborty

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 April, 2026

The Union Budget 2026–27, presented alongside the Sixteenth Finance Commission’s recommendations, represents a critical juncture in India’s fiscal federalism. An examination of the federal implications across key dimensions of Union Budget 2026–27, including the fiscal consolidation paths for the union and the states, tax devolution dynamics, power sector reforms and the calculus of consent in the subtle targeted sectoral announcements, is thus the focus of this article.

24. [Re-imagining the Aged Body](#)

Shrestha Bandopadhyay

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 16, 18 April, 2026

Paromita Chakravarti and Kaustav Bakshi, in this edited volume, have set themselves the task of filling some of the silences that remain in the emerging field of studying what ageing means from different locations and standpoints. Starting from the stark recognition that ageing as a process received during the Covid-19 pandemic and the question of liveability (Butler 2009) in a necropolitical (Mbembe 2019) system, they speak of how ageing is simultaneously a process of preservation of bodies for some and disposability for others—depending upon their social locations. As ageing always remains a relative process, the book refuses to see ageing only as a crisis. Rather, they try to champion a subversive stance towards the dominant discourse on ageing as a problem to be solved. Following a queer-feminist method throughout, the book covers 13 chapters spread across different thematic grounds. Chapter 1 speaks of how aged bodies can transform from symbols of frailty to resistance. The following six of the 13 fall under the ambit of ageing and elderly care, with chapters that move beyond the heteronormative framework and speak of processes of queer ageing. The book interestingly follows these broadly ethnography-based writings with text-based and cultural studies-oriented work on ageing superstars, and analysis of dance and theatre. The final two chapters are written from a deeply personal perspective, narrating life events of the authors V Geetha and Trina Neelina Banerjee themselves, speaking of traumatic ruptures that care and bereavement bring with them.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

25. [Negative Control Falsification Tests for Instrumental Variable Designs](#)

Oren Danieli, Daniel Nevo, Itai Walk, Bar Weinstein, Dan Zeltzer

AER; Vol. 116, NO. 4, April 2026

The validity of instrumental variable (IV) designs is typically tested using two types of falsification tests. We characterize these tests as conditional independence tests between negative control variables—proxies for unobserved variables posing a threat to the identification—and the IV or the outcome. We describe the conditions variables must satisfy in order to serve as negative controls. We show these falsification tests examine not only independence and the exclusion restriction but also functional form assumptions. Our analysis reveals conventional applications of these tests may flag problems even in valid IV designs. We offer implementation guidance to address these issues.

26. [Spillovers in State Capacity Building: Evidence from the Digitization of Land Records in Pakistan](#)

Shan Aman-Rana, Clement Minaudier

AER; Vol. 116, NO. 4, April 2026

Digitization reforms have been hailed as an effective way of strengthening state capacity. However, digitization can also fundamentally reshape the organization of bureaucracies. Using a unique administrative dataset on agricultural taxation and surveys of local bureaucrats from Punjab, Pakistan, we show that digitization reforms can have unintended consequences for state capacity. We exploit the staggered rollout of the digitization of land records in Punjab to show that digitization had a negative effect on tax collection. The fall in taxes was not due to a decrease in the tax base. Instead, digitization affected the bureaucrats' capacity to collect taxes.

RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

27. [Education and Inequality in India's Changing Urban Landscapes](#)

Geeta Thatra

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 14, 04 Apr, 2026

Shifting Landscapes: Education and Urban Transformations in India edited by Geetha B Nambissan, Nandini Manjrekar, Shivali Tukdeo and Indra Sengupta, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2025; pp xvii + 340, price not indicated (open access).

Shifting Landscapes: Education and Urban Transformations in India, edited by Geetha B Nambissan, Nandini Manjrekar, Shivali Tukdeo, and Indra Sengupta, makes a timely intervention in debates on education and urbanisation in India. While both have long been regarded as the “pillars of modernisation” (p 6), as the editor’s note, the volume addresses a significant gap in scholarship by examining their “mutually constitutive relationship” (p 2). Framing Indian cities as sites of neo-liberal reconfiguration since the 1990s, the volume asks a salient question: How do education and the urban shape each other, and how does this relationship produces social exclusion?

28. [Recasting Rural Employment](#)

Jyothis Sathyapalan

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 15, 11 April, 2026

By consolidating rural employment expenditure into a centrally planned flagship programme—the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)—the budget moves away from a demand-responsive employment guarantee towards a normatively planned and fiscally capped framework. Such a shift redefines how employment risk is managed, weakening the countercyclical and insurance functions of public employment and transferring residual labour risk from the state to rural households.

29. [Migration, Social Identity, and Education](#)

Ayushi Basoya, Rama Pal

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 17, 25 April, 2026

The marginalised groups in rural areas opt to migrate to urban centres to elude the inherent social hierarchies. It is hoped that the caste- and religion-based segregations will dilute with urbanisation, making way for upward mobility. The findings of the present study indicate that significant disparity persists in urban India, with migrant households and marginalised groups consistently experiencing a lower quality of life. However, the triple interaction of migrant status, social background, and education helps in reversing some of the disparity, as higher education benefits the marginalised sections more than the non-marginalised. The findings

suggest a need for more inclusive policies that address and enhance the housing and educational outcomes of marginalised populations.

WATER RESOURCES

[30. The Value of Clean Water: Experimental Evidence from Rural India](#)

Fiona Burlig, Amir Jina, & Anant Sudarshan

American Economic Review vol. 116, no. 3, March 2026

Over 2 billion people lack clean drinking water. Existing solutions face high costs (piped water) or low demand (point-of-use chlorine). Using a 60,000 household cluster-randomized experiment, we test an alternative approach: decentralized treatment and home delivery of clean water to the rural poor. At low prices, take-up exceeds 90 percent, sustained throughout the experiment. High prices reduce take-up but are privately profitable. We experimentally recover revealed-preference measures of valuation. Willingness-to-pay is several times higher than prior indirect estimates; willingness-to-accept is larger and exceeds marginal cost. Self-reported health measures improve accordingly. On a cost-per-DALY basis, free water delivery regimes appear highly cost effective.

[31. Repair, Revise and Reuse: The Need for Circularity and Resilience in Bundelkhand's Drinking Water Provisioning](#)

Sohini Sengupta & Ajeet Kumar Pankaj

EPW; Vol. 61, Issue No. 17, 25 April, 2026

Village households in chronically drought-prone affected areas of Bundelkhand have long lacked access to adequate water. News and social media document how localities, habitats, people and wild fauna are crushed by the absence of drinking water every summer. Recent surveys and government dashboard data show that the government has been able to supply drinking water to most areas through standardised public drinking water programmes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). Earlier projects such as the Bundelkhand special package also attempted to address what was viewed as chronic water scarcity in the region which was periodically affected by meteorological droughts. Yet, what is also visible is that access to water is a fraught and anxiety-causing issue in the hot, long summers of Bundelkhand. Paradoxically, the area is also well known for its heritage of water management and preservation, remnants of which can be seen both in the unique network of

rainwater-based tank systems as well as in the thousands of brick-lined wells dating back to the 19th century that are spread all over the towns and villages. Though most such structures are in a dilapidated condition at present. A recent scholarship on water governance and management practices discusses how “valuing water” that involves balancing and resolving widely contrasting values and perspectives may become an important “boundary concept” for decision-making (Schluz et al 2024). The need to integrate cultural and environmental values in water policymaking, beyond market calculation, is also well established (Euzen et al 2011). If heritage constitutes valuable features of the wider environment that must be protected and preserved, then Bundelkhand’s fraying link but continued dependence on older water structures and newer water practices merits closer attention.