



नीति आयोग
NITI AAYOG



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Compiled By:

Dr. Kumar Sanjay, Director (Library)

Smt. Indira Rani, LIO

Smt. Varsha Satija, ALIO

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AGRICULTURE

1. A Welcome Mission for Cotton Productivity

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The new Mission for Cotton Productivity was approved by the union cabinet in May 2026. It also earmarked ₹5,659 crore for funding the mission over the five years from 2026–27 to 2030–31. The primary aim of the mission is to improve both the quality and quantity of cotton production in the country by developing high-yielding, pest-resistant seeds and scaling up other production technologies, and raising cotton productivity, measured in kilograms (kg) per hectare (ha), from the current level of around 440 to 755, roughly the global average. This is to raise total cotton output from about 300 lakh bales of 170 kg to 498 lakh bales by 2031.

While the cabinet decision is certainly welcome and long overdue, cotton production has been in crisis for more than a decade, after both productivity and output peaked around the middle of the last decade. This surge in output and productivity to peak levels was mainly driven by the large-scale adoption of Bt cotton in the first decade of the millennium. Cotton productivity, which hovered around 300 kg per ha in the early 2000s, surged to a peak of 566 kg per ha by 2013–14, which more than tripled cotton production to a peak level of 6.8 million tonnes.

ECONOMICS

2. Taxing the Wealth of the Poor: Evidence from the Danish Old-Age Support Asset Test/ Niels Johannesen, Johan Sæverud & Emmanuel Saez

American Economic Review: Insights, Vol. 8, no. 2, June 2026

The factsheet of the sixth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), conducted in 2023–24, presents a broad trend of consistent, incremental gains for the country, particularly in maternal health and child vaccinations. India's total fertility rate has stabilised below the replacement level at 2.0, institutional deliveries have increased from 78% in 2015–16 (NFHS-4) to 90%, and full immunisation coverage for children aged 12–23 months has gone up from 62% in 2015–16 to 82%. However, there are some disquieting patterns, besides the missing data on conflict-ridden Manipur, and for several key indicators. The gains in child nutrition seem to be slower, with undernutrition and wasting (weighing less than the norm for a given height) appearing to be stubbornly persistent. Nearly 30% of children under five remain stunted, that is, short in relation

to age, which, despite some reduction, remains a globally alarming figure. Wasting and underweight (weighing less than the norm for a given age, in the case of children under five) appear to be stagnant at 19% and 32%, respectively, with no improvements from the fifth round to the sixth. Only 15% of children aged between 6 and 23 months receive an adequate diet. Exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months has, in fact, reduced from 63% in 2019–21 to 55% in 2023–24. Despite progress in economic indicators, Gujarat continues to top the charts in poor child nutrition, with stunting and wasting in rural areas of the state at an alarming 40%.

3. [**Intimate Partner Violence in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Insights from Economic Research / Manisha Shah & Lydia Barski**](#)

[Journal Of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2026](#)

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive global issue, with approximately one in three women experiencing IPV during her lifetime. IPV prevalence is higher in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), and costs of IPV are also considerably larger as a percentage of GDP in LMICs. We present the economic theory behind IPV and highlight some important determinants, such as poverty and societal norms. We then synthesize the causal evidence on the impact of a range of policies and interventions, highlighting approaches that have been effective in reducing IPV. We identify key insights from the existing literature and outline areas where further theoretical and empirical research is needed.

4. [**Welfare Fees, Welfare Boards and Platform Capture in India's Gig Economy/ Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra & Madan Meher**](#)

[EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 June, 2026](#)

The Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025 is the first state-level social security law specifically for app-based gig workers in India (Bansal 2025). It mandates a differential “welfare levy” of 1%–5% on platform commissions with exact rates set by the government to fund a new Gig Workers’ Welfare Board and social security fund (Balasubramanyam 2025; Das 2025). The law obliges platforms like Uber, Ola, Swiggy, and Zomato to register all gig workers, provide clear contracts and work reports, and remit fee deductions into a digital verification system—the Payment and Welfare Fee Verification

System (PWFVS)—within six months (Bansal 2025; Balasubramanyam 2025). Gig workers gain rights to registration, a unique ID, a two-tier grievance redressal, and social security schemes (Das 2025; PRS India 2024, 2025). Karnataka’s measure is “rights-based” in intent (Balasubramanyam 2025), with the state becoming the first in the south (second overall) to legislate on gig labour. This may serve as a template for others: only four states have legislations on gig labour at the moment. Crucially, the new levy directly affects the gig giants by cutting into their commissions, raising the core question: Who will actually pay for this social protection—the workers or the platforms (and their customers)?

5. [Failure of MC14: Deepening WTO’s Crisis/ Biswajit Dhar](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 June, 2026

The 14th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization ended in failure. Its member states failed to agree on a work programme that could have proved that the multilateral trading system is still relevant. India should be disappointed as the WTO members failed to stamp their approval on its programme of public stockholding that supports the public distribution system. Yet another World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial conference, the 14th ministerial conference (MC14) held at the Cameroonian capital of Yaoundé, has ended in failure. The MC14 failed to produce a ministerial declaration, the consensus document on the decisions taken by the ministers and the work programme for the organisation. In the three decades of the WTO’s existence, this is the sixth occasion when, in a ministerial conference, the highest decision-making body of the WTO, trade ministers have failed to take decisions.¹ Crisis in its decision-making is not something that the WTO is unfamiliar with, but the failure of MC14 has left the youngest multilateral organisation facing an existential crisis at its most defining moment, when President Donald Trump’s unilateralism has severely dented the multilateral trading system. MC14 was an opportunity for the WTO members to reinforce the fundamental principles of multilateralism, which, unfortunately, were lost in Yaoundé.

EDUCATION

6. [The Impact of Unions on the Wage Distribution: Evidence from Higher Education / Michael Baker, Yosh Halberstam, Kory Kroft, Alexandre Mas & Derek Messacar](#)

American Economic Review: Insights, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 2026

We estimate the impact of unionization on the wage distribution of Canadian university faculty using longitudinal administrative data on salaries and exploiting the staggered rollout of unionization across institutions. We find that unionization compressed salaries: Wages at the bottom of the unconditional distribution increased by roughly 10 percent, while wages at the top were unaffected. Our evidence suggests that these distributional impacts were driven by the introduction of contractual salary floors. We also estimate little impact of unionization on faculty employment. Instead, our results suggest that the increase in universities' wage bills was financed by an increase in student enrollment.

7. [Different Paths to College Success: The Impact of Massachusetts's Charter Schools on College Trajectories / Sarah R. Cohodes & Astrid C. Pineda](#)

American Economic Review: Insights, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 2026

The charter school movement encompasses many school models. In Massachusetts in the 2010s, the site of our study, urban charter schools primarily used "No Excuses" practices, whereas nonurban charters had greater model variety. Using randomized admissions lotteries, we estimate the impact of charter schools by locality on college preparation, enrollment, and graduation. Urban charter schools boost all of these outcomes. Nonurban charter schools raise college enrollment and graduation despite reducing state test scores and AP enrollment. Notably, the nonurban charter college graduation edge is more than twice as large as that from urban charter attendance.

8. [The NEET Fiasco / T Sundararaman](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

Much of the discussion about the NEET fiasco has correctly highlighted the governance failures associated with the testing and the urgent need to remedy this. But as the problems run deeper, many of the measures currently proposed, including computerisation, are unlikely to solve this recurrent challenge. We need to rethink merit as an abstract and inherent property of individual students, uncovered by a single multiple-choice-questions-based national examination. We should use this opportunity to align the processes of selection, training, and certification in healthcare education with creating professionals who can respond with empathy to the healthcare needs of people.

9. [Early Childhood Care and Education in India / Sreeparvathy G](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 June, 2026

Enrolment rates in early childhood care and education programmes have steadily increased in India as a consequence of state policies and parental choices. Yet, the quality and adequacy of services remain far from satisfactory. This paper explores the role of regulation in six critical areas of ECCE and its interlinkages with quality. The public sector, which predominantly caters to socially and economically backward sections of society, lags behind in implementation despite high policy aspirations. The private sector regulations are either absent or weak and insufficient to address the heterogeneity and diversity of institutions. India must establish a robust regulatory framework to ensure equality, quality and social inclusion in the ECCE.

10. [India's Academic Paradox / Akshay Trilokinath Maurya & Kamal Rathore](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 June, 2026

The article by Sonali Gupta, “Making Itself Irrelevant: How Indian Academia Is Outsourcing Its Credibility to Foreign Journals” (*EPW*, 25 April 2026), provides a timely analysis of the epistemological crisis within Indian higher education. Gupta rightly highlights the paradox in which our top institutions, such as Indian Institutes of Management and Indian Institutes of Technology, possess vast financial resources and global networks, yet have substantially failed to build a robust domestic research ecosystem. Instead of establishing a domestic framework at par

with the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) list, these institutions enforce foreign standards to validate and lend credibility to the Indian research.

11. Dependent Federalism: Implementing National Education Policy 2020 in Meghalaya / Batskhem Myrboh & Airpeace Well Rani

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

Dependent federalism explains how the union enjoys greater authority, and thus, dominates and coerces the states by exercising greater financial, political, legal, and policymaking power. This is especially true of states which are financially weaker. In this context, this article shows how the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 in Meghalaya is an example of dependent federalism. Education in India has undergone significant policy changes since independence, effected by national educational policies adopted by the union at different stages. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the latest of such policies. It claims to structurally change education in India by aligning it with technological, economic, and ecological global realities with a firm footing on what has been described as “Indian values and heritage” (Ministry of Human Resource Development nd). However, the NEP 2020 has been embroiled in controversies. It was adopted when the nation was grappling with the COVID-19 lockdown. The most controversial features are its scope for centralisation of power that affects the federal structure of the country and its pursuit of Hindutva ideology. While the states under governments in opposition, such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka,¹ largely rejected the policy, if not wholly, those under the rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), proclaimed it as a game changer.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

12. Mangroves in India: Spatial and Temporal Dynamics of Carbon Sequestration / Priti Agarwal, Akanksha Narayan & Aaina Dutta

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 June, 2026

Mangroves are critical carbon sinks, yet changes in their extent and density complicate assessments of carbon sequestration potential. Using recent data (2021–23), this article examines spatial and temporal shifts in India’s mangrove cover across states and density classes. While transitions towards denser categories enhance ecological function, simultaneous divergent changes

require nuanced interpretation. By incorporating carbon stock differentials across density classes, the analysis shows that West Bengal and Tamil Nadu experienced net losses in carbon storage potential, whereas Gujarat and Odisha registered net gains over 2021–23.

13. Recasting Disaster Governance: The Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025 / Dinesh Kumar Aswal

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

India's disaster profile has undergone a significant transformation in the past decade due to the intensifying climate extremes, fragile Himalayan systems, rapid urbanisation, and emerging techno-industrial risks. The Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025 seeks to address this changing risk landscape by strengthening institutional mechanisms, decentralised response systems, and disaster data infrastructures. This article examines the act's key provisions and argues that it marks a shift from relief-centric approaches towards anticipatory, science-based, and development-oriented disaster governance aimed at enhancing India's long-term resilience.

14. At Home in the Forest: Politics of 'Voluntary' Relocation in Mudumalai / Senkathirvanan K & Ajit Menon

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

The idea of "voluntary" relocation in the context of conservation-induced displacement in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu is examined. Drawing on the experiences of the Kattu Naickars, it argues that voluntariness is often produced through the denial of amenities, services, forest access and rights rather than through informed consent. Engaging with the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, the article highlights how legal and administrative processes facilitate displacement while marginalising forest-dwelling communities and their claims to justice and coexistence.

On a dusky evening in early 2024, on the outskirts of Gudalur in the Nilgiris, Kattu Naickar¹ families in Jenupadi,² a small hamlet, prepared for the onset of darkness. Unlike the quiet evenings they once experienced deep inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), dusk here demanded vigilance, anticipation, and unease. Although the Kattu Naickars have coexisted with

wildlife for generations, they now report feeling more vulnerable after relocation from the tiger reserve. Jenupadi is located on uneven terrain and accessed through a narrow, muddy footpath. The government-constructed houses are scattered and poorly lit, making movement after sunset difficult. Residents recount sightings of tigers nearby, while leopards, elephants, and bears are frequently reported around the settlement.

15. IMO's Carbon Levy and Implications for India's Tax Architecture / Manoj Kumar singh & Niranjana J Anil

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

The International Maritime Organization's proposed global carbon levy marks a significant shift in maritime climate governance and raises important questions for India's taxation framework. This article examines the constitutional and legal issues involved in domesticating the levy, including its classification within India's fiscal architecture and the legislative route required for implementation. It also analyses enforcement challenges, relating to customs administration.

In April 2025, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as part of its commitment towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 on climate action, adopted a landmark framework on maritime emissions. The Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC 83) approved the "Net-Zero Framework," which, among other things, introduces a global pricing mechanism for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from vessels. Emerging from the 2023 IMO Greenhouse Gas Strategy,¹ the framework is significant not merely because it establishes emission-reduction targets, but because it creates a global carbon-pricing mechanism for the maritime sector. The proposal received support from 63 of the 104 participating countries, including India, the United Kingdom and member states of the European Union (EU). Sixteen countries opposed the framework, among them are the United States (US), Russia, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. Countries such as China and Brazil expressed reservations regarding the carbon levy, although they supported the carbon-trading component of the framework.

16. Is Climate Action Commensurate with Achieving 1.50C Target from an Equity Perspective? / Anshuman Gupta

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 Jun & Jul 4, 2026

There is a growing mismatch between climate actions implemented on the ground and what is required to achieve the 1.50°C temperature goal necessary to avert the most severe impacts of climate change, particularly from an equity perspective. The outcomes of COP30 have further underscored this gap, offering limited reassurance regarding enhanced global ambition.

The growing disconnect between the optics and the reality of climate action is becoming increasingly stark. This gap is widening even as the climate crisis intensifies. Scientific assessments consistently warn that global temperatures are on course to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit by 2030, a threshold that has already been temporarily crossed due to the combined impact of El Niño and human-induced warming. The year 2024 was the hottest ever recorded, with global average temperatures reaching around 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels.

FINANCE/BANKING

17. The Theory of Financial Stability Meets Reality: A Unifying Framework for Bank Regulation and Accounting Discretion / Nina Boyarchenko, Kinda Hachem & Anya Kleymenova

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2026

A large literature at the intersection of economics and finance offers prescriptions for regulating banks to increase financial stability. This literature abstracts from the discretion that accounting standards give banks over financial reporting, creating a gap between the information assumed to be available to regulators in models of optimal regulation and the information available to regulators in reality. We bridge insights from the economics, finance, and accounting literatures to synthesize knowledge about the design and implementation of bank regulation and identify areas where more work is needed. We present a simple framework for organizing the relevant ideas, namely the externalities that motivate bank regulation, the rationales for allowing accounting discretion, and the use of discretion to circumvent regulation. Our takeaway from reviewing work in these areas is that academic studies of bank regulation and accounting discretion require a more unified approach to design optimal policy for the real world.

18. [Weaponised Finance and the Tariff War / Anoop S Kumar](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 Jun, 2026

Punitive tariffs, secondary sanctions, and control over payment networks form a continuum of coercive statecraft. India's options to reduce exposure may present themselves through alternative payment systems and bilateral currency arrangements. A more autonomous financial architecture may mitigate vulnerability, yet building it presents significant technical, economic, and diplomatic challenges. The United States (US) post-war dominance in global trade and finance has relied not only on the superior productivity of its firms, but also on the centrality of its currency and financial infrastructure. Control over payment systems, ranging from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) network to the Federal Reserve's Fedwire settlement mechanism, provides unmatched power to impose trade restrictions and financial sanctions. This power was on full display during President Donald Trump's first term (2017–21), when his administration used Section 232 national security provisions to levy tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from a host of partners, and again during his current term (2024–28). The unilateral tariffs introduced from late 2024 onwards sought to coerce India into cutting off oil purchases from Russia and to pry open Indian markets to US agricultural and dairy exports.

19. [New Data, New Estimates: A Critical Examination of India's 2022–23 National Accounts Rebasing / Gulab Singh & A C Kulshreshtha](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The National Statistical Office's revision of India's National Accounts Statistics from base year 2011–12 to 2022–23 constitutes one of the most consequential overhauls of the country's macroeconomic measurement framework in recent decades. This paper examines the principal changes in estimation methodology, data sources, and classificatory frameworks introduced under the new series. The revision leverages transformative data ecosystems that emerged after 2011–12—most notably the Goods and Services Tax Network, the upgraded MCA21 Version 3 corporate database, the Periodic Labour Force Survey, and the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022–23. The paper systematically reviews changes in the estimation of gross domestic product by production and expenditure approaches, gross value added by economic

activity, Private Final Consumption Expenditure, Gross Fixed Capital Formation, saving and capital formation, and Quarterly Estimates of GDP. The analysis finds that the revision has led to notable changes in the structural composition of the economy, the measured savings-investment balance, and the trajectory of quarterly growth, with significant implications for macroeconomic policy analysis and international comparability.

20. Financial Inclusion of Women in India: Beyond Deposit Access / Sandeep Kaur, Pallavi Chavan & Riddhi Lakhiani

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

Treating access to bank deposits as the basic benchmark, this paper, using household-level data, argues for a wider understanding and assessment of women's financial inclusion. Deposit access has grown significantly for women, along with a welcome trend of diversification of their financial savings from deposits to other formal savings instruments in the post-pandemic period. However, women's usage of bank deposits and other formal instruments remains much lower. In 2025, the credit-to-deposit ratio for women was only 43% as compared to 93% for men. The gender gap is wider in the well-banked regions, including urban areas, indicating that banking development in these regions has not benefited women proportionately.

Globally, women have been at the centre of financial inclusion initiatives, given not only their socio-economic vulnerability but also their potential to transform household finances and economic well-being. This focus on women can be traced back to the introduction of microfinance in Bangladesh during the 1980s, which came to India in the early 1990s. While adopting microfinance's innovative model of group lending, India has charted a somewhat different path for women's finance in general and microfinance in particular.

21. CAG Report on State Finances

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

The third report on state finances by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) offers a consolidated overview of the fiscal accounts of all 28 states of the Indian union. Titled “State Finances 2024–25: Decadal Analysis,” it examines interstate and inter-temporal trends over the decade from 2014–15 to 2024–25, allowing for a more holistic assessment of the fiscal position of the states. Despite a few questionable inferences, the report makes a useful effort to provide deeper insights into fiscal management across the states. For instance, it argues that the states’ own tax revenue improved after the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST). The evidence is that the average annual growth of the states’ own tax revenue was 11.1% in the seven years following the introduction of GST, compared with 10.5% in the three years preceding it.

HEALTH

22. The Private Provision of Public Services: Evidence from Random Assignment in Medicaid / Danil Agafiev Macambira, Michael Geruso, Anthony Lollo, Chima D. Ndumele & Jacob Wallace

American Economic Review, Vol. 116, No. 6, June 2026

This paper examines the effects of privatizing social health insurance. We exploit a natural experiment in Medicaid, wherein nearly 100,000 enrollees were randomly assigned between a publicly operated fee-for-service system and private managed care. Managed care reduced costs by 5.6 percent via cost-effective substitutions among prescription drugs and via lower prices for outpatient services. We present evidence that pharmacy utilization management was the key mechanism reducing overuse and encouraging substitution to lower-cost drugs without decreasing observed quality. In contrast, privatizing medical benefits led to only modest savings and was associated with decreased health care quality and consumer satisfaction.

23. Survivors' Mental Health and the Protective Role of Income Stability / Itzik Fadlon, Astrid Sophie Fugleholm & Torben Heien Nielsen

American Economic Review: Insights, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 2026

We use administrative records on the universe of Danish households to characterize survivors' mental health following their spouse's death. We provide visually clear evidence for the immediate, large, and lingering adverse impacts and focus on studying the role of income security in driving the immediate effects. We find that, for both males and females, a large share of the spike in the take-up of mental health medication upon spousal death can be explained by the income loss imposed by the shock. Our results imply that safety net policies can improve survivors' mental health via the immediate liquidity they provide.

24. Less Than Robust Family Health Report

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The factsheet of the sixth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), conducted in 2023–24, presents a broad trend of consistent, incremental gains for the country, particularly in maternal health and child vaccinations. India's total fertility rate has stabilised below the replacement level at 2.0, institutional deliveries have increased from 78% in 2015–16 (NFHS-4) to 90%, and full immunisation coverage for children aged 12–23 months has gone up from 62% in 2015–16 to 82%. However, there are some disquieting patterns, besides the missing data on conflict-ridden Manipur, and for several key indicators. The gains in child nutrition seem to be slower, with undernutrition and wasting (weighing less than the norm for a given height) appearing to be stubbornly persistent. Nearly 30% of children under five remain stunted, that is, short in relation to age, which, despite some reduction, remains a globally alarming figure. Wasting and underweight (weighing less than the norm for a given age, in the case of children under five) appear to be stagnant at 19% and 32%, respectively, with no improvements from the fifth round to the sixth. Only 15% of children aged between 6 and 23 months receive an adequate diet. Exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months has, in fact, reduced from 63% in 2019–21 to 55% in 2023–24. Despite progress in economic indicators, Gujarat continues to top the charts in poor child nutrition, with stunting and wasting in rural areas of the state at an alarming 40%.

25. Public Health System Effectiveness and COVID-19 Fatality Rates / Hariprasad T & Anish T S

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

The case fatality proportion (or case fatality rate) is widely used to compare health systems because it is easily available and understandable. However, differences in the age distribution of infected populations can bias such comparisons. This study estimates age-standardised COVID-19 infection fatality rates across Indian states and examines whether their relationship with reported case fatality proportions can indicate the effectiveness of public health measures in managing the pandemic.

The health and well-being of affected individuals are important host-related determinants of mortality in the epidemiological triangle model of infectious diseases. From a public health perspective, the age distribution of the population is an often-undercounted surrogate measure of many of these host factors, which can influence the mortality rate of these acute illnesses. Therefore, age standardisation of mortality statistics is used to make most of these territorial health indicators comparable and those comparisons more meaningful.

26. Women's Health and the Silences of NFHS-6 / Neha Tripathi & Aditi Nidhi

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

The editorial, “Less Than Robust Family Health Report” (EPW, 13 June 2026), accurately identifies the significant omissions in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 factsheet. I wish to argue, however, that these silences are not random. Taken as a whole, these are an institutional pattern of invisibility of women's health that has direct implications for evidence-based policymaking. If indicators that disproportionately affect women disappear from the flagship national survey, it is women's bodies and health outcomes that bear the cost of that erasure. This is not incidental; this is “structural” invisibility. Women have been marginalised in Indian healthcare policy as reproductive subjects rather than rights holders as citizens of the Constitution. Public health discourse has been mostly preoccupied with maternal and child health, fertility control, and population stabilisation, thereby limiting women's health identity to a biological one. The discussion on women's health in India needs to move to the next level and acknowledge women as constitutional citizens whose health rights derive from fundamental rights read

harmoniously with the directive principles of state policy, recognising women not merely as mothers or potential mothers, but as full constitutional subjects. The silences in NFHS-6 represent a continuation of precisely this maternalistic orientation.

LAW AND SOCIETY

27. Faith, Privacy, and Abuse of Anti-conversion Laws / Faizan Mustafa

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

Several state governments in India, through their anti-conversion laws, have blurred the lines between a democratic state and a theocratic state. Disguised as an attempt to rescue people from being converted against their will, these laws challenge the very notion of individual liberty and privacy. As an epilogue to the recent Rajendra Bihari Lal judgment (2025), this article presents a critique of India's identity politics and contemporary conversion rhetoric that not only condemns religious conversions, but also creates the narrative of imaginary "love jihad." Drawing upon the individual autonomy argument, prevailing punitive policies under these laws necessitate a critical evaluation.

28. Flaws in the Impeachment of Judges / Alok Prasanna Kumar

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

Justice Yashwant Varma's resignation midway through the impeachment process has exposed a major deficiency of the process prescribed under the Constitution to remove a judge of the high court. However, it is not a design flaw with the process. The flaw has been created by later decisions, which have weakened the process of impeachment as a tool for accountability. Reverting these decisions may be necessary to strengthen the impeachment process.

Facing impeachment proceedings, Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court tendered a letter of resignation to the President of India on 7 April 2026. In a separate letter, he complained that he did not receive a fair hearing from the Judges Inquiry Committee (JIC) set up by the Lok Sabha speaker to look into allegations of misconduct against him, calling the proceedings "unfair" (Mishra 2026). As of the date of publication of the article, the President has not formally accepted Justice Varma's resignation.

29. [Recasting Disaster Governance: The Disaster Management \(Amendment\) Act, 2025 / Dinesh Kumar Aswal](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

India's disaster profile has undergone a significant transformation in the past decade due to the intensifying climate extremes, fragile Himalayan systems, rapid urbanisation, and emerging techno-industrial risks. The Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025 seeks to address this changing risk landscape by strengthening institutional mechanisms, decentralised response systems, and disaster data infrastructures. This article examines the act's key provisions and argues that it marks a shift from relief-centric approaches towards anticipatory, science-based, and development-oriented disaster governance aimed at enhancing India's long-term resilience.

30. [Political Justice in the Constitution and the Imminent Delimitation / Aymen Mohammed](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The constitutional value of political justice should guide the forthcoming constituency delimitation and seat apportionment. Prevailing debates centred on the "north–south" divide have obscured a parallel and serious concern: gerrymandering. Neither gerrymandering nor malapportionment can be adequately addressed through political compromise; both require constitutionally grounded solutions. Political justice, understood through the principles of sharedness and effective representation, provides a normative framework for apportionment and remedying partisan boundary-making. The paper addresses two gaps: it proposes a constitutional value to orient future delimitation exercises and clarifies the substantive content of political justice as a constitutional commitment.

31. [Unsealing Judicial Power / Ashwini Obulesh](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The Supreme Court of India stands in a paradoxical light: venerated as the sentinel of rights, yet mistrusted for abetting their erosion. This paradox is not new: since independence, the Court has oscillated between moments of bold assertion—*Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala* (1973), which articulated the basic structure doctrine—and moments of abdication, most

notoriously *ADM Jabalpur v Shivkant Shukla* (1976) during the Emergency, when it upheld suspension of the writ of habeas corpus.

Courts in a Time of Constitutional Strain

The last decade has renewed these anxieties. With the rise of majoritarian nationalism, unprecedented centralisation of power, and the targeting of minorities, dissenters, and journalists, expectations from the judiciary have only augmented. Yet, the Court has often seemed unwilling to meet the moment.

32. [SC Sub-classification Verdict: The Path to Social Justice in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana / Suman Damera, L C Mallaiah, Harinath Silveru & Pottepaka Sandeep Kumar](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The August 2024 Supreme Court verdict in *State of Punjab and Others v Davinder Singh and Others* (2024) upheld sub-classification within the Scheduled Castes to address internal inequalities. While critics fear weakened Dalit unity, the ruling advances substantive equality. This article argues that dominant SC castes in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have benefited disproportionately, intensifying sub-caste disparities and fuelling demands for equitable internal categorisation nationwide.

32. [Autonomy in Divorce: Choice or Compulsion / Asrarul Haque Jeelani & Neelam Sukhramani](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The article, “The ‘Failure’ of Marriage or the Success of Autonomy? Rethinking Divorce beyond Stigma” by Laksheetta Choudhary (EPW, 24 January 2026), argued that divorce should not be read as a moral failure or a breakdown of social order, but as a marker of women’s autonomy. Choudhary builds arguments within the feminist legal scholarship that views dissolution of marriages as an assertion of agency and dignity rather than signalling moral decay. She also cites judicial pronouncements to indicate recognition of autonomy within marriage and its dissolution. The law is, however, framed in a manner that does not necessarily allow for the exercise of autonomy, and reference needs to be made of Section 23(2) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and

Section 34(2) of the Special Marriage Act, 1954, where the courts are duty-bound to make endeavours to bring about reconciliation between parties in the case of a divorce petition that rescinds autonomy to the periphery. Further, several recent judgments, including *Neha Lal v Abhishek Kumar* (Supreme Court, 2026), also reiterate the need for attempting reconciliation, between couples. The judiciary has also held that reaching out to the police station erases chances of reconciliation, and tolerance is regarded as the cornerstone of marriage.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

33. Digital Consumption in India during 2022–23 and 2023–24 / Balu Pawde

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 23, 06 June, 2026

Using HCES 2022–24, the rapid expansion of India’s digital consumption across rural and urban households via online purchases and payments is shown, with rural catch-up but at lower levels. Digital consumption growth is led by non-food services (travel, utilities, clothing) while food remains stagnant. While higher-income and educated households dominate, SC/ST lag, indicating stratification requiring access, connectivity, digital literacy, inclusion policies.

India has witnessed a significant transformation in both its digital payments and e-commerce landscape in recent years, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, such technological advances have been blurring boundaries between the traditional ways of consumption and production (Brynjolfsson et al 2013). The evolution in India has been propelled by a blend of policy-driven initiatives, such as Digital India, Jan Dhan Yojana, and the concurrent growth of digital public infrastructure, including Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), along with the proliferation of private platforms like e-commerce apps and mobile wallets (Department of Economic Affairs 2025). These developments have been further reinforced by behavioural shifts among consumers (Brynjolfsson et al 2013), greater smartphone penetration, and increased comfort with digital interfaces.

35. [From 50 Years Ago: Kerala: Science for Social Revolution / K P Kannan](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

Science has seldom appeared in the agenda of any popular programme of action in our country. But a unique experiment in “taking science to the common man” has been going on in this part of the country for quite some time now. The most spectacular part of this experiment was the programme of organising of 3,000 science classes during January 1976 by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, “a forum for the development of science and scientific outlook and for social transformation”. At the end of the campaign, it was found that nearly 12,000 classes were conducted as against the 3,000 originally planned for. The themes of classes were (i) Nature, (ii) Society and (iii) Science. The first was intended to give a comprehensive idea about the interrelations of the various elements in nature, the relation between space, time and mass, and also the nature of the ‘dilemma’ prevailing on the frontiers of physics. The second theme dealt with historical development of social systems and the kind of problems in them which come in the way of fully harnessing the scientific and technological knowledge that mankind has accumulated over time. The last theme dealt with such aspects of the development of tools as influenced the growth of different scientific and technical disciplines which in turn affected the socio-cultural formation of societies.

36. [Articulating the Maternal: Indian Motherhood and Mothering in the Digital Space of Blogs / Sucharita Sarkar](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 26-27, 27 June & July 4, 2026

Blogs written by Indian mothers are important sources of understanding how motherhood and mothering are perceived and articulated in digital spaces. This paper analyses a sample survey of specific Indian mothers’ blogs from 2000 to 2025. It investigates how mothers use the affordances of blogging to negotiate “motherhood” as a patriarchal institution, to navigate “mothering” as a demanding yet fulfilling experience and also, often, to conform to models of neo-liberal feminism. The paper also situates these digital narratives in the larger discourse of contemporary Indian maternity.

In a blog article, Rana (2024) describes “mom-bloggers” as “everyday mothers who blog about parenting, childcare, and baby products,” adding that they “journal their experiences as a mother

and help other parents to embrace the new journey of parenthood.” Koshy (2007), on the other hand, prioritises different aspects of blogging and lists several reasons why mothers blog: “to express their thoughts and connect with like-minded people;” “to get suggestions on parenting,” which they would earlier get from “older female family members;” “to share their babies’ growing up days with close family and friends who might be living far away.”

RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

37. Clean Cities, Contaminated Water: The Contradictions of Urban Governance in Indian Cities / Ravi Bhushn & Purba Barua

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 24, 13 June, 2026

The case of drinking water contamination in Indore in early 2026 reveals the widening gap between performative urban governance and the realities of basic municipal service provisioning. As Indian cities compete through rankings and certifications, the reliability of essential infrastructures, such as drinking water systems, remains precarious, thereby increasing the vulnerabilities for the urban poor. This raises crucial questions about the institutional, financial, and governance constraints faced by urban local bodies in managing urban drinking water systems.

WATER RESOURCES

38. Water-stressed Nation Calls for Political Courage

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 25, 20 June, 2026

Droughts and heatwaves sear many parts of India. Cities see water rationing. Sowing and planting have been put off. Considering the persistent reality of global warming, India cannot continue with its business-as-usual non-policy towards water. India is home to 18% (1.45 billion) of the world’s population but has access to only 4% of the world’s fresh water. Since 2011, India’s annual average per capita water availability has consistently been below 1,651 m³/year, making it a water-stressed country as per the Falkenmark Water Stress Indicator. India has to make optimal use of the water resources it has, and that is a function of political economy. Growing water-guzzling crops in arid regions, relying on subsidised lift irrigation, refusing to use price as the means to regulate water usage, and failing to mandate water recycling where this is feasible—all these mark policy

failures that verge on the criminal in the face of an emerging and growing shortage of water in India. It is political courage that is called for to fix India's water crisis.

39. Clean Cities, Contaminated Water: The Contradictions of Urban Governance in Indian Cities / Ravi Bhushn & Purba Barua

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