

The State Of Inequality In India Report

❖ Context

- The report written by the Institute of Competitiveness was commissioned and released by the Economic Advisory Council to PM.

❖ Key Highlights

- Based on the data derived from various rounds of the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**, **National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)** and **UDISE+**.
- The report looks at **five key areas** that influence the nature and experience of inequality. These are income distribution, labour market dynamics, health, education and household characteristics.

❖ Income Distribution

- A monthly salary of **Rs 25,000** is amongst the **top 10%** of total incomes earned.
- The **top 1%** accounts for **6-7%** of total incomes earned.
- The **top 10%** holds almost **one-third share** of all incomes earned.

❖ Education

- By 2019-20, **95%** of schools had **functional toilet facilities** on the school premises and **80.16%** of schools have **functional electricity connections**.
- An increase in GER is symbolic of increasing investment, Out of approx. **26.6 crore total enrolments**, **37%** in private unaided (recognised) and **50%** in government schools.

❖ Household Characteristics

- According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), **97%** of households have **electricity access**, **70%** have improved access to **sanitation**, and **96%** have access to **safe drinking water**.
- **44.4%** wealth concentration in the highest quintile in urban areas while **7.1%** in the highest quintile in rural areas.

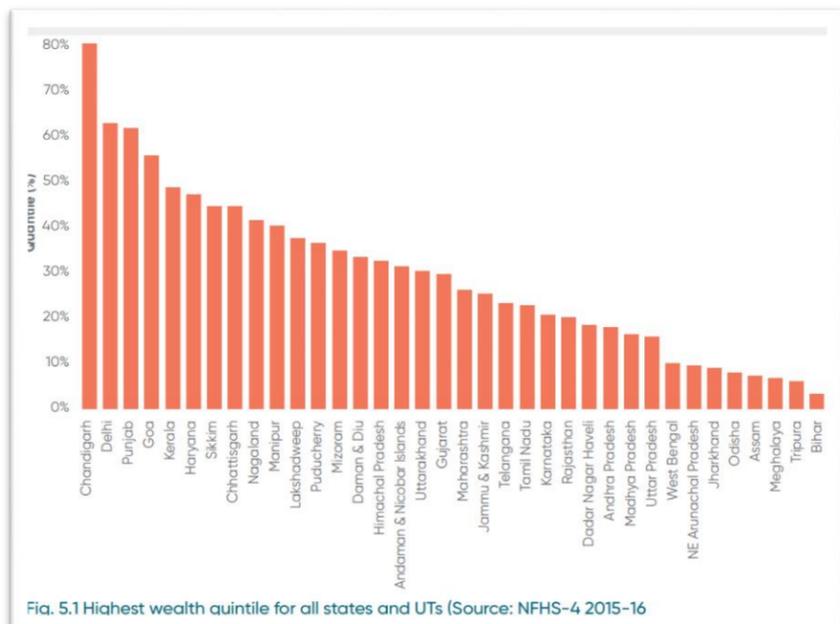


Fig. 5.1 Highest wealth quintile for all states and UTs (Source: NFHS-4 2015-16)

❖ Labour Market

- In 2019-20, among different employment categories, the **highest percentage was self-employed workers (45.78%)**, followed by regular salaried workers (33.5%) and casual workers (20.71%).
- The share of self-employed workers **also happens to be the highest in the lowest income categories**.
- The country's **unemployment rate is 4.8% (2019-20)**, and the **worker population ratio is 46.8%**.
- Growth in terms of increase in wages earned have taken place but the **benefits have been concentrated** which has marginalised the poor further.



❖ Health

- Expenditure incurred on health is one of the major factors that leads to descent into poverty.
- **13%** of the monthly per capita income directed towards out of pocket health expenditure, as of 2020.
- Improvement from 54.78% in 2019 but **short of targeted (SDG) - 7.8%**.



- **Jharkhand (26.2%)** and **Bihar (25.6%)** have the highest rate of women with low BMI, while Bihar (21.5%) and Gujarat (20.9%) have the highest rate of men with low BMI.
- **Percentage of anaemic children under 5 have increased - 58.6%** (2015-16) to **67.1%** (2019-20). **Gujarat (79.7%)** and **Ladakh (92.5%)** report more than the national average.

❖ Recommendations

- Every household should be empowered that the cost of **recommended diet (CoRD)** should not be greater than **16%** of their household consumption expenditure.
- Education and cognitive development from the foundational years is a long-term corrective measure for inequality. Investment in foundational literacy can lead to about **7.3% increase in GDP**.
- **Employment guarantee programme** for the urban unemployed should be launched.
- **Universal basic income scheme** should be rolled out to reduce the income gap.



Denisovans

❖ Context

- The findings, published in Nature Communications, throw new light on the regions inhabited by Denisovans, and their **interbreeding with the ancestors of modern humans.**

❖ Key Highlights of the Study

- Scientists had found the **first physical evidence of Denisovans living in SE Asia.**
- They had discovered the **wisdom tooth of a child, most likely a girl, in a cave in Laos named Cobra cave in 2018, where it was likely deposited 1,60,000 to 1,30,000 years ago.**

❖ About Denisovans

- They lived lakhs of years ago, **coexisting with Neanderthals** in some regions, and **interbreeding with early modern humans** in some cases.
- They were **first identified as a separate species in 2010**, following the discovery of a fragment of a finger bone and two teeth, dating back to about 40,000 years ago, in the Denisovan Cave in **Siberia.**
- In 2019, another fossil - a mandible with a set of teeth - was found on the **Tibetan plateau.**

❖ Why are Fossils Of Denisovans Rare?

- One reason why Denisovan fossils are so rare is that their **population was smaller than that of Neanderthals.**
- Neanderthals are adapted to Western Eurasia and to cold regions, whereas Denisovans originated from **Far East Asia with certainly less favourable climate conditions** to preserve the bones.

❖ Significance of the Findings

- It proves that they were also adapted to a warm environment which means that they had **very large flexibility of adaptation.**
- It also confirms recent genetic findings that some populations (Negrito from Philippines, Papuans and Australian Aborigines) have 3 to 5% of Denisovan genes compared to others with 0.001%. Meaning that at some point, their ancestors interbred with some Denisovans in Southeast Asia..

Sela Tunnel

❖ Context

- The strategically-significant **Sela Tunnel project** in Arunachal Pradesh is nearing completion.



❖ Key Highlights

- The project, being executed by the **Border Roads Organisation, includes two tunnels and a link road.**
- The **total length of the project, including the tunnels, the approach and the link roads, will be around 12 km.**
- **Tunnel 2 (1555 m)** will be **one of the longest tunnels** to have been constructed above an altitude of **over 13,000 feet.**

❖ About Sela Pass

- The Sela Pass is **located on the border between the Tawang and West Kameng districts** in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

- It has an elevation of 4170 m (13,700 ft) and connects the Indian Buddhist town of Tawang to Dirang and Guwahati.
- The **pass carries the National Highway 13 (previously NH 229), connecting Tawang with the rest of India.**

❖ Benefits

- New alignment on the axis towards the LAC, and **allow movement of military and civil vehicles all through the year to Tawang and forward areas.** Sela pass stays closed for a few winter months.
- **Reduction in more than one hour of travel time from Tezpur to Tawang.**
- Travellers **avoiding dangerous snow covered Sela top** at a height of 13,700 feet.

News in Between the Lines

Amendments to National Policy on Biofuels - 2018

❖ Context

- The Union Cabinet has approved the amendments to the National Policy on Biofuels -2018.

❖ Key Highlights

- The **National Policy on Biofuels - 2018** was notified by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on 04.06.2018 in supersession of National Policy on Biofuels, promulgated through the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, in 2009.
- Main amendments:
 - To allow more feedstocks for production of biofuels.

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- To advance the ethanol blending target of 20% in petrol to Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26 from 2030.
- To promote the production of biofuels in the country, under the Make in India program, by units located in Special Economic Zones (SEZ)/ Export Oriented Units (EoUs). To add new members to the National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC).
- To grant permission for export of biofuels in specific cases.
- The National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) chaired by Minister PNG and representatives from 14 other ministries and departments had been constituted to provide overall coordination, taking decisions on matters specified in the policy for the committee, effective end to end implementation and monitoring of biofuel programs in the country.

Chief of Defence Staff



❖ Why In News?

- It's now over five months since the country's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat was killed in a chopper crash, the Government is yet to announce a successor to the country's top military post.

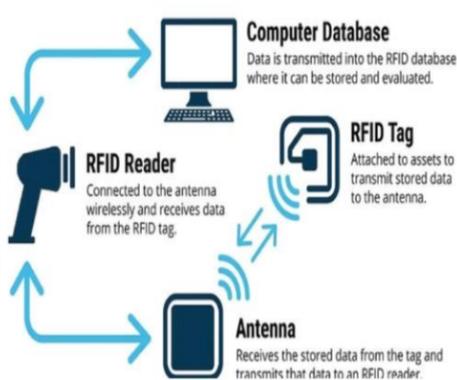
❖ Role of the Chief of Defence Staff:

- He will act as the Principal Military Adviser to Defence Minister on all tri-Services matters.
- The CDS is meant to bring about synergy and optimise procurements, training and logistics and facilitate restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/ theatre commands.
- The CDS will also evaluate plans "for 'Out of Area Contingencies', as well other contingencies such as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). The specialised tri-service divisions special operations, defence cyber and defence space are also under the ambit of the CDS.
- **Issues:** There is dichotomy in the roles and responsibilities with the several hats worn by the CDS and also overlap in responsibilities between the (Department of Military Affairs)DMA and (Department of Defence) DoD.

RFID Tags will be Used to Track Amarnath Pilgrims



Basic RFID System



❖ Context:

- After a high-level security review for the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra, the government has decided to track all pilgrims using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags.

❖ Radio Frequency Identification (RFID):

- It's a wireless tracking system that consists of tags and readers.
- Radio waves are used to communicate information/identity of objects or people to nearby readers – devices that can be hand-held or built into fixed positions like poles or buildings. The tags can carry encrypted information, serial numbers and short descriptions.
- There are passive and active RFID tags. Active RFIDs use their own power source, mostly batteries. Active tags can ping information every few seconds like beacons, or they can get activated when a reader is in the proximity.
- Passive RFIDs, on the other hand, are activated through the reader using the electromagnetic energy it transmits.
- This is enough power for the tag to transmit information back to the reader.
- Active tags have a longer read range, around 300 ft, compared to passive tags.

❖ How do RFIDs Work?

- RFID tags use an integrated circuit and an antenna to communicate with a reader using radio waves at several different frequencies – low frequency (LF), high frequency (HF), and ultra-high frequency (UHF).
- The message sent back by the tag in form of radio waves is translated into data and analysed by the host computer system.
- Unlike Barcodes, RFIDs do not require direct line of sight to identify objects. They have a bigger range.

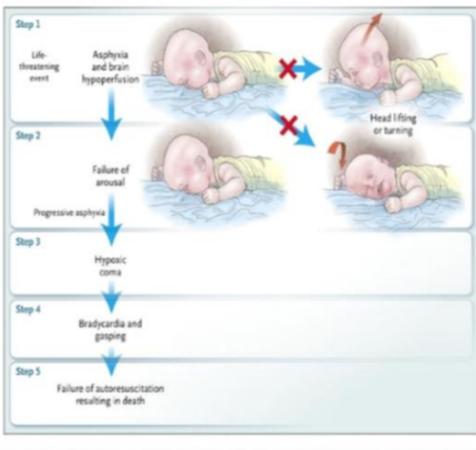
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❖ **Where are RFIDs Commonly Used?**

- Retail giants use them for **inventory tracking**.
- RFID chips are used **as access keys in labs**.
- They are also built into **credit cards and library books**.
- Currently, the FastTags being used for toll payments across the country are also **RFID tags**.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome



❖ **Why in News?**

- A team of scientists from Australia have found that **babies at risk of the mysterious Sudden Infant Death Syndrome**, or SIDS, generally have low levels of an enzyme called **butyrylcholinesterase (BChE) in their blood**.

❖ **What is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?**

- **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** refers to the sudden and unexpected death of an otherwise healthy infant under the **age of one**, generally while **they are sleeping**.
- Most SIDS-related deaths occur in infants between the age of **1-4 months**.
- Some health experts have said that it is associated with issues in the part of an infant's **brain that controls breathing and waking up**.

❖ **Role of Butyrylcholinesterase BChE Enzyme:**

- These enzymes are responsible for sending **out signals that make a baby wake up**, turn her head, or gasp for breath.
- It is part of the **autonomic system, and controls functions** like blood pressure and breathing.
- If a baby is confronted with a life-threatening situation, such as difficulty breathing during sleep because they are on their tummies, **they will arouse and cry out**.
- What this research shows is that some babies don't have this **same robust arousal response**. Parents can reduce the risk of SIDS by not **smoking while pregnant** or after the baby is born and ensuring that the baby is **placed on their back when they sleep**.

Chittagong Port



❖ **Context:**

- Bangladesh has offered India the use of the Chittagong port to enhance connectivity with the northeastern states.

❖ **Significance:**

- The Chittagong or Chhatogram port is one of the important seaports of Bangladesh, located in the region of Chittagong hill tracts.
- Due to the sea port's close proximity with North-Eastern Indian states, the port facility has the potential to significantly boost economic activity in the North-East Indian states, providing close access to global shipping lanes.

Multi Agency Centre (MAC)



Multi Agency Centre (MAC)

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❖ **Context**

- **Intelligence Bureau (IB)** has been granted 138.48 crore by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** for a "technology upgrade" of the **Multi Agency Centre**.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- It is a common counter-terrorism grid under the Intelligence Bureau that was made operational in 2001 following the Kargil War.
- Now functioning 24/7 as the nodal body for sharing intelligence inputs, MAC coordinates with representatives from numerous agencies, different ministries, both central and state.
- As many as 28 organisations, including the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), armed forces and State police, are part of the platform and Various security agencies share real-time intelligence inputs on the MAC.
- Plans are afoot for more than a decade to link the system up to the district level.
- **Significance:** MAC will help to fight against illicit use of cyber space, crime terror nexus, narco - terrorism, terror financing, global terror groups, movement of foreign terrorist fighters.

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