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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SOURCES



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GS I

1. Demand for Bhil Pradesh

Source: IE

Context: Recently, the demand for a separate Bhil state, “Bhil Pradesh,” has been gaining momentum in Rajasthan and neighbouring states.

Who are Bhils and What are their Demands?

Bhils:

- Bhils are considered as **one of the oldest tribes in India** and identified as one of the Dravidian racial tribes of Western India belonging to the Australoid group of tribes.
- They are a cross section of the great **Munda race** and a wild tribe of India and speak a **language (Bhili)** of Dravidian origin.
- Once they were the rulers in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Malwa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.
- As per **Census 2011**, there are 1.7 crore Bhils across the country.
- Their largest concentration is in Madhya Pradesh at about 60 lakh, followed by 42 lakh in Gujarat, 41 lakh in Rajasthan and 26 lakh in Maharashtra.
- Bhils are Hindus by religion and appease deities of forest and evil spirits beside pujas of **Lord Shiva and Durga**.

Demand of Bhil Pradesh:

- The demand for Bhil Pradesh dates back to 1913 when **Govind Giri Banjara**, a tribal activist and social reformer, first called for a separate Bhil state during a mobilisation at **Mangarh Hill**.
- This was followed by a tragic massacre where British forces killed around 1,500 tribals.
- Over the decades, various tribal leaders, including political figures, have periodically revived this demand.
- The proposed Bhil Pradesh would cover 49 districts across four contiguous states including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. This would involve 12 districts from Rajasthan.

Reasons for the Demand:

- **Cultural and Linguistic Homogeneity:** The Bhil community shares a common language, Bhili, and cultural practices across the four states. Proponents argue that a separate state would better preserve and promote their cultural heritage.
- The Fazl Ali Commission also considered linguistic and cultural homogeneity as one of the factors for the formation of the new states.
- **Geographic Considerations:** The proposed Bhil Pradesh would encompass 49 districts across these four states, with significant tribal populations. This region has historical and cultural ties that transcend current state boundaries.

Political Marginalisation: Tribal leaders claim that existing political structures have failed to adequately address the needs and aspirations of the Bhil community.

A separate state is seen as a solution to ensure more focused governance and development.



Developmental Focus: Proponents believe a separate state would lead to more tailored development policies and better utilisation of resources for tribal welfare.

Historical neglect and slow implementation of laws like the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, highlight the need for more localised governance.

Criticism of Demand:

- Critics argue that creating states based on caste or community could lead to further fragmentation and instability.
- The Fazl Ali Commission had opined that the unity of India should be regarded as the primary consideration in any redrawing of the country's political units.
- There is also resistance from established political parties which have complex stakes in maintaining the status quo.
- Opponents argue that forming states based on tribal identity could exacerbate social divisions.



GS III

2. Economic Survey 2023-24

Source: PIB

Context: The Economic Survey for 2023-24 was recently tabled by the Union Minister for Finance in the parliament. It offers a comprehensive view of India's economic performance and future prospects. What are the Key Takeaways from the Economic Survey for 2023-24?

State of the Economy:

- **Real GDP Growth:** India's real GDP grew by 8.2% in FY24, surpassing the 8% mark in three out of four quarters of FY24.
- **Retail Inflation:** Retail inflation decreased from 6.7% in FY23 to 5.4% in FY24.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** The CAD improved to 0.7% of GDP in FY24 from 2.0% in FY23.
- **Tax Revenue:** Direct taxes contributed 55% of the total tax revenue, with indirect taxes making up the remaining 45%.
- **Capital Spending:** The government progressively increased capital expenditure and provided free food grains to 81.4 crore people.

Monetary Management and Financial Intermediation – Stability is the Watchword

- **Monetary Policy:** The RBI maintained a steady policy repo rate at 6.5% throughout FY24.
 - Consequently, Core inflation declined by around 4% from April 2022 to June 2024.
- **Credit Growth:** Credit disbursement by Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) reached Rs 164.3 lakh crore, growing by 20.2% by March 2024.
- **Banking Sector:** Gross and net non-performing assets are at multi-year lows, and bank asset quality has improved.
 - Data from the RBI's Financial Stability Report of June 2024 show that the asset quality of SCBs has improved, with the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio declining to 2.8% in March 2024, a 12-year low.
 - Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has been recognised as an effective solution for the twin balance sheet problem, in the last 8 years, 31,394 corporate debtors involving a value of Rs 13.9 Lakh Crore have been disposed of as of March 2024.
 - Twin Balance Sheet Problem refers to heavily indebted corporations and banks burdened with bad loans, creating a vicious cycle hindering economic growth.
- **Capital Markets:** Primary capital markets facilitated capital formation of Rs 10.9 lakh crore, approximately 29% of the gross fixed capital formation of private and public corporates in FY23.
- **Insurance and Microfinance:** India is poised to become one of the fastest-growing insurance markets and has the second-largest microfinance sector globally.

Prices and Inflation – Under Control:

- **Inflation Trends:**
 - 29 States and Union Territories recorded inflation below 6% in FY24.
 - Core services inflation eased to a nine-year low in FY24.
 - Food inflation increased from 6.6% in FY23 to 7.5% in FY24.
 - Price cuts on LPG, petrol, and diesel helped in keeping retail fuel inflation relatively low.
 - **Future Projections:** The RBI forecasts inflation to decline to 4.5% in FY25 and 4.1% in FY26.



- **External Sector – Stability Amid Plenty:**
 - **Exports:** India's services exports grew by 4.9% to USD 341.1 billion in FY24, with significant contributions from IT/software and other business services.
 - **Remittances:** India remains the top global recipient, with remittances totaling USD 120 billion in 2023.
 - **External Debt:** India's external debt to GDP ratio stood at 18.7% as of March 2024.
 - **Logistics Performance:** India's rank in the World Bank Logistics Index improved to 38th in 2023 from 44th in 2014.
 - **Tourism:** India's share in world tourism receipts increased from 1.38% in 2021 to 1.58% in 2022.
- **Medium-Term Outlook – A Growth Strategy for New India:**
 - **Growth Strategy:** To sustain a 7%+ growth rate, a tripartite compact between the Union Government, State Governments, and the private sector is required.
 - **Key Focus Areas:** Job and skill creation, agriculture, MSME bottlenecks, green transition, and addressing the education-employment gap are crucial for medium-term growth.
- **Climate Change and Energy Transition – Dealing with Trade-Offs:**
 - **Renewable Energy:** As of May 2024, non-fossil sources accounted for 45.4% of installed electricity generation capacity.
 - **Energy Needs:** India's energy needs are projected to grow 2 to 2.5 times by 2047.
 - **Investment in Clean Energy:** The clean energy sector attracted investments of Rs 8.5 lakh crore between 2014 and 2023.
- **Social Sector – Benefits that Empower:**
 - **Welfare Expenditure:** Grew at a CAGR of 12.8% between FY18 and FY24.
 - **Healthcare:** Over 34.7 crore Ayushman Bharat cards have been issued.
 - **Housing:** 2.63 crore houses constructed under PM-AWAS-Gramin in the past 9 years.
 - **Rural Infrastructure:** 15.14 lakh km of roads constructed under the Gram Sadak Yojana since 2014-15.
- **Employment and Skill Development – Towards Quality:**
 - **Unemployment Rate:** Declined to 3.2% in 2022-23.
 - Net payroll additions under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) have more than doubled to 13.15 million in the past five years, indicating robust growth in formal employment.
 - **Youth Unemployment:** Fell from 17.8% in 2017-18 to 10% in 2022-23.
 - **Female Labor Force Participation:** Rising for six consecutive years (37.0% currently).
 - **Gig Economy:** Workforce expected to reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30.
- **Agriculture and Food Management**
 - **Agricultural Growth:** The sector registered an average annual growth rate of 4.18% at constant prices over the last five years.
 - **Credit and Micro Irrigation:** Credit disbursed to agriculture amounted to Rs 22.84 lakh crore.
 - 90 lakh hectares covered under micro-irrigation since 2015-16.
 - **Kisan Credit Cards:** 7.5 crore cards issued with a Rs 9.4 lakh crore limit.
- **Industry – Small and Medium Matters:**
 - **Industrial Growth:** Economic growth of 8.2% in FY24 is supported by an industrial growth rate of 9.5%.
 - **Pharmaceutical and Clothing Sectors:** India's pharmaceutical market is the world's third-largest by volume, valued at USD 50 billion.
 - It is the second-largest clothing manufacturer globally, with textile and apparel exports reaching Rs 2.97 lakh crore in FY24.



- **Electronics Manufacturing:** India's electronics sector accounts for an estimated 3.7% of the global market share.
 - Domestic production increased to Rs 8.22 lakh crore, with exports rising to Rs 1.9 lakh crore in FY23.
- **Services – Fuelling Growth Opportunities:**
 - **Sector Contribution:** The services sector accounted for 55% of the economy in FY24 and grew by 7.6% during the year.
 - **Digital Services:** India's share in global digitally delivered services exports increased to 6% in 2023.
 - Globally, India's services exports constituted 4.4% of the world's commercial services exports in 2022 & accounted for 44% of India's total exports in FY24.
 - **Aviation:** 15% YoY increase in total air passengers in FY24.
 - **E-commerce:** Expected to cross USD 350 billion by 2030.
 - **Start-ups:** Increased from around 2,000 in 2014 to approximately 31,000 in 2023.
- **Infrastructure – Lifting Potential Growth:**
 - **National Highways:** The pace of National Highways construction increased from 11.7 km per day in FY14 to approximately 34 km per day by FY24.
 - **Railways:** Capital expenditure on Railways increased by 77% over the past five years.
 - **Aviation:** 21 new airport terminal buildings operationalised in FY24.
 - **Logistics:** Rank in the International Shipments category improved to 22nd in 2023 from 44th in 2014.
 - **Space:** India has 55 active space assets, including 18 communication, 9 navigation, 5 scientific, 3 meteorological, and 20 earth observation satellites.
 - **Digital Infrastructure:** The DigiLocker platform has over 26.28 crore registered users and over 674 crore issued documents.
 - **Telecommunication:** The overall teledensity (number of telephones per 100 population) in India increased from 75.2% in March 2014 to 85.7% in March 2024.
 - The internet density also increased to 68.2% in March 2024.
- **Climate Change and India:**
 - Current global strategies for climate change are flawed and not universally applicable.
 - The Western approach does not seek to address the root of the problem, i.e., overconsumption, but rather chooses to substitute the means to achieve overconsumption.
 - A one-size-fits-all approach will not work, and developing countries need to be free to choose their own pathways.
 - **India's ethos emphasises a harmonious relationship with nature**, in contrast to the culture of overconsumption in other parts of the developed world.
 - Shifting towards '**traditional multi-generational households**' could pave the way towards sustainable housing.
 - "**Mission LiFE**" focuses on human-nature harmony, promoting mindful consumption rather than the overconsumption that lies at the root of the global climate change problem.

What are the Major Challenges and Recommended Solutions Outlined in the Economic Survey 2023-24?

- **Key Challenges Identified:**
 - **Global Headwinds and FDI:** The prospects for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are not very promising due to high interest rates in developed countries, which increase the cost of funding and the opportunity cost of investing in developing nations like India.



- Additionally, industrial policies in developed countries that offer substantial subsidies for domestic investment further complicate the competitive landscape.
- Geopolitical uncertainties also pose challenges.
- **China Dependency:** India remains heavily dependent on China for imports, especially in the renewable energy sector.
 - Furthermore, China continues to dominate the low-skill manufacturing space that India has aimed to occupy.
- **AI Threat:** The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) could potentially disrupt the telecommunications and Internet-driven business process outsourcing (BPO) sector, which has seen significant growth.
- **Tepid Private Investment:** Despite tax cuts implemented in September 2019 to boost capital formation, the corporate sector's response has been underwhelming.
 - Corporate profits before taxes have surged, but hiring and compensation have not kept pace.
- **Employment Imperative:** There is a notable lack of high-quality and timely data related to employment. This gap hampers effective labour market analysis and policy making.
 - To accommodate the growing workforce, the Indian economy must create approximately 7.85 million non-farm sector jobs annually until 2030.
- **Lifestyle Disadvantages:** Social media, excessive screen time, sedentary lifestyles, and unhealthy food choices are identified as factors that could undermine public health and productivity, impacting India's economic potential.
- **Recommended Solutions:**
 - **Job Creation by the Private Sector:** The survey emphasises that it is in the interest of the corporate sector, which is currently experiencing excess profits, to take on a more active role in job creation.
 - **Lifestyle Changes by the Private Sector:** Indian businesses are encouraged to embrace traditional lifestyle practices and healthy food recipes, which not only align with global trends but also open up new commercial opportunities.
 - **Revitalising the Farm Sector:** Given the challenges in manufacturing and services, the survey suggests focusing on improving agricultural practices and policies.
 - This includes increasing value addition, boosting farmers' income, and creating opportunities in food processing and exports.
 - **Removing Regulatory Bottlenecks:** It advocates for reducing the regulatory burden on businesses, particularly for Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs).
 - Streamlining licensing, inspection, and compliance requirements is crucial.
 - **Administrative Strengthening:** Instead of large-scale reforms, the survey calls for strengthening state capacity to support and accelerate India's progress through effective implementation and management.



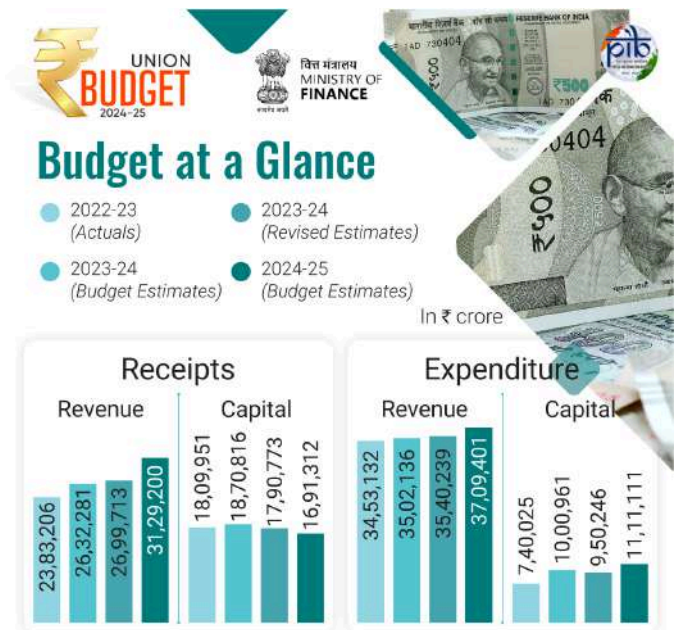
3. Union Budget 2024-25

Source: PIB

Context: Recently, the Union Budget 2024-25 was presented in the Parliament. It was the first general budget of the 18th Lok Sabha.

BUDGET:

- **Focus Area:** As outlined in the Interim Budget, the focus of the budget remains on four major groups: 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth), and 'Annadata' (Farmers).
- **Budget Theme:** The Union Budget 2024-25 emphasises employment, skilling, support for MSMEs, and the middle class. A significant allocation of Rs 1.48 lakh crore is earmarked for education, employment, and skilling.
- **Budget Priorities:** The budget prioritises **nine areas including agriculture, employment, human resource development, manufacturing, services, urban development, energy security, infrastructure, innovation, research & development, and next-generation reforms.**
- **Priority 1: Productivity and Resilience in Agriculture:**
 - Measures include releasing new 109 high-yielding crop varieties, promoting natural farming among 1 crore farmers, establishing 10,000 need-based bio-input bio-input centres, and enhancing production, storage, and marketing of pulses and oilseeds (achieve 'atma nirbharta' for oil seeds).
 - A provision of Rs 1.52 lakh crore has been announced for agriculture and allied sectors this year.
 - Government along with the states, will facilitate the implementation of the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in agriculture for coverage of farmers and their lands in 3 years.
- **Priority 2: Employment & Skilling:**
 - The budget introduces schemes like **Employment Linked Incentive and initiatives** to boost skilling with a focus on skilling 20 lakh youth over a 5-year period and upgrading 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes.
 - Financial support for higher education and loans for skilling are also announced.
 - The Model Skill Loan Scheme will be revised to facilitate loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh with a guarantee from a government promoted fund, which is expected to help 25,000 students every year.
- **Priority 3: Inclusive Human Resource Development and Social Justice:**



- Enhanced support for economic activities among **marginalised groups, including tribal communities and women entrepreneurs**, is emphasised.
- The government's **Purvodaya initiative** aims to comprehensively develop the eastern region of India- including Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, focusing on human resource development, infrastructure enhancement, and economic growth to advance towards a developed nation.
- The Finance Minister announced the launch of the **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan to enhance the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities**, covering 63,000 villages in tribal-majority areas and aspirational districts, benefiting approximately 5 crore tribal people.
- Over 100 branches of India Post Payment Bank will be established in the NorthEast region to enhance banking services, alongside a provision of Rs 2.66 lakh crore allocated for rural development and infrastructure this year.
- **Priority 4: Manufacturing & Services:**
 - The budget emphasises support for **MSMEs**, focusing on labour-intensive manufacturing, with a new self-financing guarantee fund offering up to Rs 100 crore per applicant.
 - Public sector banks will enhance their internal assessment capabilities for MSME credit. Additionally, Mudra loan limits will increase to Rs 20 lakh for previous '**Tarun**' category borrowers.
 - The budget also includes initiatives like setting up 50 food irradiation units, establishing 100 food quality labs, and creating E-Commerce Export Hubs.
 - Furthermore, a scheme for internships in 500 top companies aims to benefit 1 crore youth over 5 years.
- **Priority 5: Urban Development:**
 - **PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0**, has been allocated Rs 10 lakh crore to address housing needs of 1 crore urban poor and middle-class families, with Rs 2.2 lakh crore in central assistance over 5 years.
 - The government will also collaborate with State Governments and Multilateral Development Banks to promote water supply, sewage treatment, and solid waste management in 100 large cities through bankable projects.
 - Additionally, building on the success of PM SVANidhi, the government plans to establish 100 weekly street food hubs (haats) annually over the next five years.
- **Priority 6: Energy Security:**
 - PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana aims to install rooftop solar plants for free electricity to 1 crore households (up to 300 units every month).
 - Nuclear energy is highlighted as a significant part of India's energy mix.
- **Priority 7: Infrastructure:**
 - Government will try to maintain strong **fiscal support for infrastructure** over the next 5 years on this line Rs 11,11,111 crore for capital expenditure has been allocated this year, which is 3.4% of our GDP.
 - Phase IV of **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** to connect 25,000 rural habitations with all-weather roads due to population growth has been announced.



- For Bihar, under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme and other sources, the government will allocate Rs 11,500 crore for projects like the **Kosi-Mechi intra-state link** and 20 other schemes including barrages, river pollution abatement, and irrigation.
- Additionally, financial assistance will be provided to Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim for flood management, landslides, and related projects.
- **Priority 8: Innovation, Research & Development:**
 - The government will establish the **Anusandhan National Research Fund** to support basic research and prototype development, allocating Rs 1 lakh crore to spur private sector-driven research and innovation at a commercial scale.
 - To expand the space economy fivefold in the next decade, a venture capital fund of Rs 1,000 crore will be established.
- **Priority 9: Next Generation Reforms:**
 - Plans for an **Economic Policy Framework, labour reforms, and simplification of FDI regulations are outlined to spur economic growth.**
 - Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to improve Ease of Doing Business will be introduced by the government.

4. SC gives split verdict on pleas challenging environmental release of GM Mustard

Source: ET

Context: The Supreme Court on July 23 pronounced a split verdict on the validity of the Centre's 2022 decision granting conditional approval for environmental release of genetically modified (GM) mustard crops.

Genetically Modified (GM) Crops:

- Genetically Modified (GM) crops are plants whose DNA has been altered through genetic engineering techniques to introduce desirable traits.
 - These traits may include resistance to pests, diseases, or environmental conditions, improved nutritional content, or increased yield.
- Unlike traditional crossbreeding methods, genetic modification allows for the direct manipulation of a plant's genetic material, often incorporating genes from different species to achieve specific results.
- **Benefits of GM Crops:**
 - **Increased Yield:** GM crops can produce higher yields, contributing to food security.
 - **Pest and Disease Resistance:** Crops can be engineered to be resistant to specific pests and diseases, reducing the need for chemical pesticides.
 - **Herbicide Tolerance:** Some GM crops are designed to withstand certain herbicides, making weed control more effective.



- Enhanced Nutritional Content: Crops can be modified to contain higher levels of essential nutrients, addressing malnutrition in developing countries.
- Environmental Benefits: Reduced need for chemical inputs can lower the environmental impact of agriculture.
- **Concerns / Controversies w.r.t. GM Crops:**
 - Environmental Impact: There is ongoing debate about the potential for GM crops to affect non-target species and lead to a reduction in biodiversity.
 - Health Concerns: While extensive research indicates that GM foods are safe to eat, public concern about potential long-term health effects persists.
 - Economic Issues: GM seeds are often patented, leading to concerns about corporate control over the food supply and the economic impact on small-scale farmers.
 - Ethical and Labeling Issues: There are ethical debates surrounding the manipulation of genetic material, and many advocate for clear labeling of GM products to inform consumer choice.

Regulations w.r.t. GM Crops in India:

- In India, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change oversees all activities, operations, and products associated with genetically modified organisms.
- These are regulated under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), part of MoEFCC, has the authority to review, monitor, and approve all GMO-related activities, including import, export, transportation, manufacture, use, and sale.
 - GEAC is a statutory body established under the Environment Act.
- Additionally, GM foods must comply with the regulations set by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- Currently, cotton is the only GM crop approved for commercial cultivation in India.

GM Mustard:

- In 2023, the GEAC had recently given the green light for the commercial cultivation of genetically modified mustard.
- Dhara Mustard Hybrid (DMH-11), created by scientists at Delhi University, employs genes from soil bacteria to make mustard, typically a self-pollinating plant, more suitable for hybridization than traditional methods.
- The GEAC approved "the environmental release of mustard hybrid DMH-11 for seed production and testing in accordance with existing ICAR guidelines and other applicable regulations prior to its commercial release."

Supreme Court's Split Verdict on Permission for GM Mustard:

- The SC delivered a split verdict on the Centre's 2022 decisions regarding the environmental release of the genetically modified mustard hybrid DMH-11 for seed production and testing.
- Petitions:
 - The court was responding to pleas by activist Aruna Rodrigues and the NGO 'Gene Campaign.
 - The petition called for a moratorium on the release of any GMOs into the environment until a comprehensive, transparent, and rigorous biosafety protocol is publicly available and conducted by independent experts.
- Divergent Opinions:



- Justice Nagarathna: She deemed the October 2022 decisions of the GEAC invalid due to the absence of a health department member and the absence of eight members from the meeting.
- Justice Karol: He found no manifest arbitrariness in the GEAC decisions and stated that field trials should proceed with strict safeguards.
- Next Steps:
 - The bench referred the matter to Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud for further adjudication by the appropriate bench.
- National Policy on GM Crops:
 - Both justices agreed on the need for a national policy on Genetically Modified (GM) crops.
 - They directed the Centre to consult all stakeholders and experts within four months to formulate this policy.



Editorial, Ideas and Opinions

5. Tackling the fatty liver disease epidemic

Source: The Hindu, Page 9

Context: This year's theme for International Fatty Liver Day, an awareness initiative observed annually in June, is 'Act Now, Screen Today'. This theme holds more urgency now than ever before.

India's Growing Burden of Fatty Liver Disease

- **High Prevalence Rates:** The global prevalence of Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) is estimated at 25–30%. In India, a 2022 meta-analysis revealed that the pooled prevalence of fatty liver among adults was 38.6%. Among obese children in India, the prevalence was around 36%.
- **Progression of Disease:** The continuous damage caused by fatty liver leads to more severe conditions such as steatohepatitis and cirrhosis, often requiring liver transplants.

Causes of Growing Burden of Fatty Liver Disease

- **Lack of Early Detection:** Fatty liver disease often goes undetected in early stages due to lack of symptoms. Diagnosis usually occurs at an advanced stage, when significant liver damage has already taken place.
- **Diet and Insulin Resistance:** Excessive consumption of carbohydrates, especially refined carbs and sugars, leads to metabolic problems. High carbohydrate intake results in persistently high insulin levels and insulin resistance, promoting the conversion of excess glucose into fatty acids, which are then stored in the liver.

Initiatives Taken by the Government

- **Integration with NPCDCS:** The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare launched operational guidelines for integrating NAFLD with the National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) in February 2021.
- **Health Promotion and Prevention:** The Ayushman Bharat- Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) are being used to promote healthy living and screen for hypertension, diabetes, and other common NCDs.

Personalization is the Key

- **Tailored Screening Tests:** The selection of screening tests and their frequency should be based on individual risk factors, including family history, lifestyle, and pre-existing health conditions.
- **Avoiding Generic Assumptions:** Clinicians should not rely solely on age or physical markers; instead, they should consider a comprehensive risk profile. Non-communicable diseases are increasingly affecting diverse populations, including children.
- **Integrated Health Strategies:** Combining dietary modifications, regular physical activity, and effective weight management to mitigate liver disease risks.
- **Frequent Screenings:** Regular monitoring of liver health through non-invasive tools like vibration-controlled transient elastography. Continuous assessment of liver stiffness to detect early stages of liver fibrosis and monitor treatment responses.
- **Active Health Management:** Emphasis on the importance of individuals taking control of their health by being aware of their diet and lifestyle choices. Encouragement of frequent health screenings to detect and manage liver disease early.



In Brief

6. UNAIDS Global AIDS Update

Context: Recently, the 2024 UNAIDS Global AIDS Update, titled "The Urgency of Now: AIDS at a Crossroads", presented a critical overview of the current state of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the global response to it.

What are the Key Highlights of the Reports?

- The report underscores the potential to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, emphasising the necessity of addressing inequalities, increasing access to prevention and treatment, and ensuring sustainable resources.

Progress and Challenges:

Reduction in New HIV Infections and AIDS-Related Deaths:

- There has been a 39% reduction in new HIV infections globally since 2010, with sub-Saharan Africa achieving the steepest decline (56%).
- In 2023, fewer people acquired HIV than at any point since the late 1980s, and almost 31 million people were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- AIDS-related deaths have decreased to their lowest level since the peak in 2004, largely due to increased access to ART.

Regional Disparities:

- While sub-Saharan Africa has seen significant progress, regions such as Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa have experienced rising numbers of new HIV infections.
- For the first time, more new HIV infections occurred outside sub-Saharan Africa than within it.

Key Affected Groups:

- Key populations, including sex workers, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people, and people in prisons, continue to face high risks of HIV infection due to inadequate prevention programs and persistent stigma and discrimination.
- Community-led interventions are critical but often underfunded and unrecognized.

Prevention and Treatment Gaps:

- HIV prevention efforts are falling short, with notable deficiencies in access to services like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and harm reduction for people who inject drugs.
- About 9.3 million people living with HIV are not receiving ART, with children and adolescents particularly affected.



7. Concerns Regarding Opium Stockpiles in Afghanistan

Source: PIB

Context: Recently, the latest report by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) highlights significant concerns regarding Afghanistan's extensive opium stockpiles despite the Taliban's ban on poppy cultivation.

Key Findings of the Report

- Despite the Taliban's April 2022 ban on poppy cultivation, Afghanistan retains substantial stockpiles of opium.
- The report suggests it could take several years to assess the full impact of the ban due to these stockpiles.
- The trade-in narcotics remains significant, with no noticeable reduction in drug exports based on seizure data.
- Senior Taliban figures and well-connected traders, including the Haqqani Network, continue to profit from drug trafficking.
- Key Taliban figures control various narcotics trafficking routes.
- Methamphetamine production has surged, with significant quantities of fentanyl also being recorded.
- Major hubs for methamphetamine production include Farah, Herat, and Nimroz, with active labs in Bahramcha, Dishu district, and Helmand province.

Implications of Opium Stock Piles and Drug Trafficking

- **Trafficking Networks:** A majority of drugs trafficked to India originate from Afghanistan, with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency controlling these networks.
- **Terrorism Funding:** Drug money is increasingly being used to fund anti-India terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- **Narcotics procured from Afghanistan** are labelled in clandestine laboratories in Balochistan and then smuggled into India.
- **Significant Seizures:** Indian security agencies have uncovered direct links between Kandahar-based cartels and drug smuggling networks.
- **Notable seizures** include the National Investigation Agency (NIA) intercepting 3,000 kg of heroin at Mundra port in September 2021.
- **Government Response:** The Union Home Minister has urged security agencies to adopt a ruthless approach towards smuggling networks.
- The central government is working on installing container scanners at all ports and land border crossings to curb drug trafficking.



Daily Quiz

Q.1 What is one of the primary reasons for the demand for a separate Bhil Pradesh?

- A. To promote industrial development
- B. To achieve cultural and linguistic homogeneity
- C. To increase agricultural productivity
- D. Improve urban infrastructure

Q2. Assertion (A): The Economic Survey 2023-24 highlights the need for a tripartite compact between the Union Government, State Governments, and the private sector to sustain a 7%+ growth rate in India.

Reason (R): A collaborative approach involving all three stakeholders is crucial to address challenges such as job creation, skill development, and infrastructure improvement, ensuring balanced and inclusive economic growth.

- A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C. A is true, but R is false.
- D. A is false, but R is true.

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Bhils:

1. Bhils are identified as one of the Dravidian racial tribes of Western India belonging to the Australoid group of tribes.
2. They speak a language of Dravidian origin.
3. Bhils were once rulers in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Malwa, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Q4. Which of the following states have the highest concentration of Bhils as per Census 2011?

- A. Gujarat
- B. Maharashtra
- C. Rajasthan
- D. Madhya Pradesh

Q5. In the Union Budget 2024-2025, which of the following measures was introduced to address the twin challenges of promoting green energy and enhancing agricultural productivity?

- A. Introduction of a Green Energy Cess on fossil fuels and a special subsidy for solar irrigation pumps.
- B. Establishment of a Green Energy Investment Fund and a scheme for organic farming subsidies.
- C. Implementation of a carbon tax on industrial emissions and a policy for large-scale wind energy farms in rural areas.
- D. Launch of a National Green Hydrogen Mission and a financial incentive for precision agriculture technologies.

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding India's Real GDP Growth in FY24:

1. India's real GDP grew by 8.2% in FY24.
2. The growth rate surpassed the 8% mark in all four quarters of FY24.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?



- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q7. What percentage of the total tax revenue in India was contributed by direct taxes in FY24?

- A. 45%
- B. 50%
- C. 55%
- D. 60%

Q8. Which of the following is a theme of the Union Budget 2024-25?

- A. Defence
- B. Employment and Skilling
- C. Foreign Investment
- D. Rural Electrification

Q9. Which of the following measures is not included under the priority of "Productivity and Resilience in Agriculture" in the Union Budget 2024-25?

- A. Releasing new high-yielding crop varieties
- B. Promoting natural farming among 1 crore farmers
- C. Establishing 10,000 need-based bio-input centres
- D. Reducing import duties on agricultural machinery

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding Genetically Modified (GM) crops:

1. GM crops are created by altering the DNA of plants using genetic engineering techniques.
2. GM crops can include genes from different species to achieve specific desirable traits.
3. Traditional crossbreeding methods are used to create GM crops.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3



Solutions

1. Answer: B

Explanation:

The demand for Bhil Pradesh primarily stems from the desire to preserve and promote the Bhil community's cultural heritage and language, Bhili. Proponents of Bhil Pradesh argue that the Bhil community shares a common language and cultural practices across the four states (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra). This cultural and linguistic homogeneity is seen as a key factor in advocating for a separate state, which they believe would better address their specific needs and aspirations. This rationale aligns with the criteria considered by the Fazl Ali Commission for the formation of new states, which included linguistic and cultural homogeneity.

2. Answer: A

Explanation:

The Economic Survey 2023-24 emphasizes that achieving a sustained growth rate of over 7% requires a coordinated effort among the Union Government, State Governments, and the private sector. This tripartite compact is necessary to tackle various developmental challenges effectively. The assertion (A) is correct as it accurately states the survey's recommendation. The reason (R) is also correct and provides a valid explanation for the assertion, as a collaborative approach is essential to address issues like job creation, skill development, and infrastructure improvements, leading to balanced and inclusive economic growth. Thus, both the assertion and the reason are true, and the reason correctly explains the assertion.

3. Answer: D

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct. Bhils are identified as one of the Dravidian racial tribes of Western India belonging to the Australoid group of tribes.
- Statement 2 is correct. They speak a language (Bhili) of Dravidian origin.
- Statement 3 is correct. Bhils were once rulers in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Malwa, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar.

4. Answer: D

Explanation:

As per Census 2011, the highest concentration of Bhils is in Madhya Pradesh, with about 60 lakh Bhils.

5. Answer: D

Explanation:

The Union Budget 2024-2025 focused on addressing environmental sustainability while boosting agricultural productivity. One of the key measures introduced was the launch of the National Green Hydrogen Mission, aimed at promoting the production and use of green hydrogen as a clean energy source. This initiative is part of India's broader strategy to transition to sustainable energy and reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, the budget included financial incentives for precision agriculture technologies, which are designed to enhance agricultural productivity by making farming practices more efficient and environmentally friendly. These combined measures align with the dual objectives of promoting green energy and improving agricultural productivity, making option D the correct answer. The other options, while partially relevant, do not fully capture the comprehensive approach outlined in the budget.



6. Answer: A

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct. India's real GDP grew by 8.2% in FY24.
- Statement 2 is incorrect. The growth rate surpassed the 8% mark in three out of four quarters of FY24, not all four quarters.

7. Answer: C

Explanation:

Direct taxes contributed 55% of the total tax revenue in FY24, with indirect taxes making up the remaining 45%.

8. Answer: B

Explanation:

The Union Budget 2024-25 emphasises employment, skilling, support for MSMEs, and the middle class. A significant allocation is made for education, employment, and skilling.

9. Answer: D

Explanation:

Reducing import duties on agricultural machinery is not mentioned as a measure under the priority of "Productivity and Resilience in Agriculture." The measures include releasing new high-yielding crop varieties, promoting natural farming among 1 crore farmers, and establishing 10,000 need-based bio-input centres.

10. Answer: A

Explanation:

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. GM crops are created by altering the DNA of plants using genetic engineering techniques and can include genes from different species. Statement 3 is incorrect as traditional crossbreeding methods are not used to create GM crops.





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