

● POLITY

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

G ROHINI COMMITTEE SUBMIT REPORT OF OBC SUB-CATEGORISATION

CONTEXT: The Justice G. Rohini Commission for the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC) caste groups submitted its report to the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

BACKGROUND: The M Nagraj vs Union of India upheld the constitutional validity of Art 16(4A), 16(4B), subject to certain conditions like undertaking proper exercises by the State to show that there was inadequacy in the representation. The Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney and others vs. Union of India case (1992) upheld the powers of the States to sub-categorize backward classes based on its social and economic backwardness. So far, 9 states/UTs viz., Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, Telangana, Puducherry, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu carried out sub-categorization of OBCs. The President of India appointed a 5-member Commission headed by G. Rohini, Chief Justice (retd.), Delhi High Court under Article 340 in 2017 to sub-categorise 2,600 caste groups on the Central OBC to ensure more equitable distribution of reservations to public offices and educational institutions. The present exercise of sub-categorization within Central List of OBCs would involve identification and categorisation of castes / sub-castes / communities synonyms.

RECOMMENDATION: Reports suggest commission recommending segregation of the caste groups into broad categories, with the traditionally dominant castes receiving the least and the historically crowded-out caste groups getting the most share of the 27 % reservation.

* Excerpts from "Panel submits report on sub-categorisation of OBCs after 6 years"; The Hindu, August 01, 2023

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

GST JULY REVENUE REPORT CARD

CONTEXT: The gross GST revenue collected in the month of July, 2023 is ₹ 1,65,105 Cr. of which CGST is ₹ 29,773 Cr., SGST is ₹ 37,623 Cr., IGST is ₹ 85,930 Cr. (including ₹ 41,239 Cr. collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹ 11,779 Cr. (including ₹ 840 Cr. collected on import of goods).

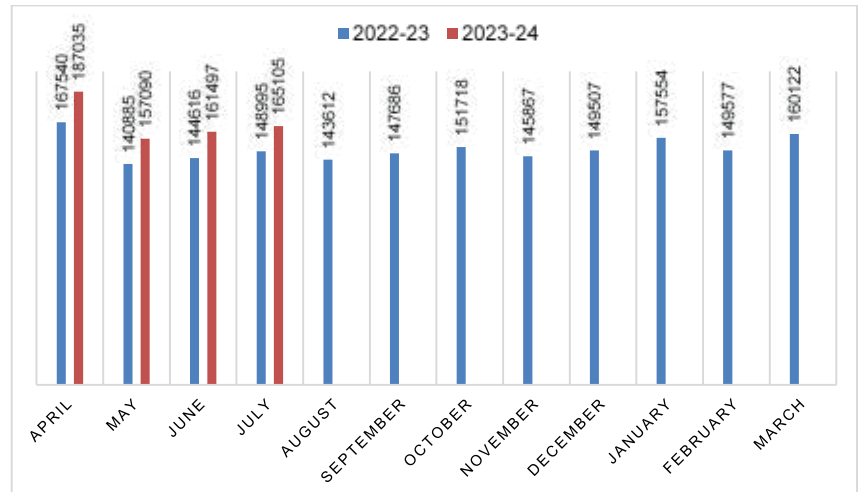


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the sub-sectorial growth rates (on Y-o-Y basis in per cent) of core sector industries.

Key findings:

1. GST revenue growth at 10.8 %, slowest year-on-year growth in collections since July 2021.
2. Revenues from domestic transactions and services imports grew 15 %.
3. Integrated GST collections on goods imports dropped by 0.43 % to ₹41,239 Cr.
4. GST Compensation Cess levies on goods imports dropped 15.6 % to ₹840 Cr.
5. Six key States generate almost 60 % of the nationwide GST collections.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

TOP 10 DEFAULTERS OWE BANKS ₹40,825 CR.

CONTEXT: India's top 50 wilful defaulters owed banks as much as ₹ 87,295 Cr., with top ten wilful defaulters alone owing ₹ 40,825 Cr. as of March 31, 2023. Assets amounting to ₹15,113.02 Cr. have been confiscated and restituted to public sector banks.

Gitanjali Gems Ltd., owned by Mehul Choksi, uncle of Fugitive Economic Offender (FEO) Nirav Modi, accounting for more than 10% of the dues. Apart from Gitanjali Gems, the others in the list include Era Infra Engineering (₹5,750 Cr.), REI Agro (₹5,148 Cr.), ABG Shipyard (₹4,774 Cr.) and Concast Steel and Power (₹3,911 Cr.).

The Enforcement Directorate had filed applications against 19 persons to be booked under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act of 2018, of which only 10 were declared FEOs. The amount of fraud involving them was more than ₹40,000 Cr. The Enforcement agencies can approach the Special Court constituted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 to declare any absconder residing in a foreign territory refusing to return and face prosecution for scheduled economic offences involving value more than Rs 100 Cr.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

CORE SECTOR GROWTH

CONTEXT: The core sector industries registered a robust five-month high year-on-year growth of 8.2 % in June.

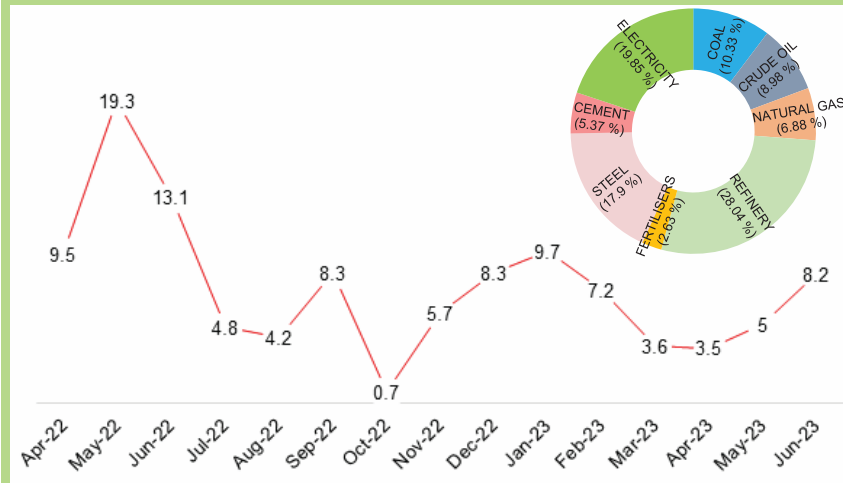


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the core sector growth rates (on Y-o-Y basis in per cent). Pie chart representation of weightage of core sector industries (Inset).

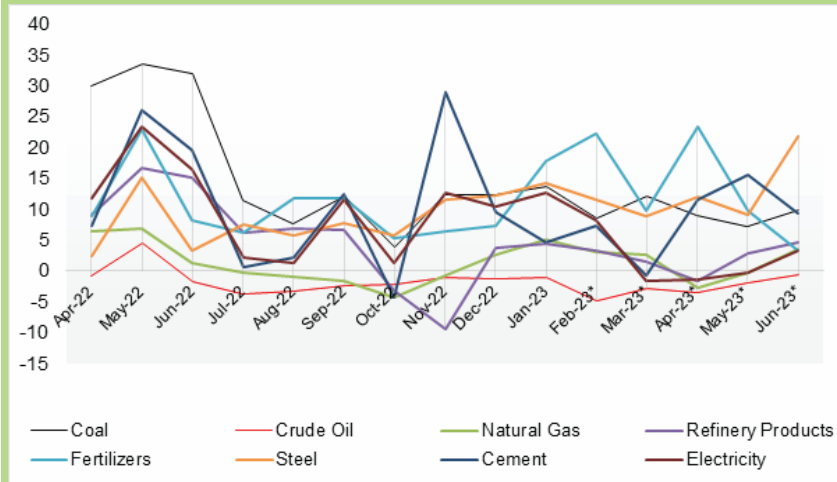


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the sub-sectorial growth rates (on Y-o-Y basis in per cent) of core sector industries. FIGURE: Column chart representation of growth of sub-sectorial growth rates (on Month-o-Month basis in per cent) of core sector industries.

Total capital expenditures by the Centre, including on affordable housing, urban renewal and transportation networks in June jumped more than 62 % year-on-year and almost 24 % from the preceding month to ₹1.10 lakh Cr. The country is still heavily reliant on crude imports for its overall fuel needs with crude oil production contracting by 0.6 % for the 13th straight month.

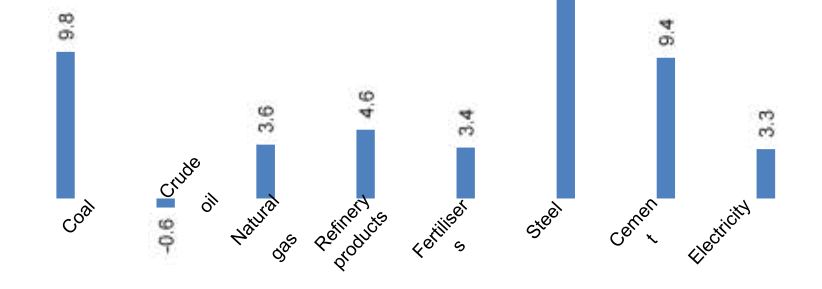


FIGURE: Column chart representation of growth of sub-sectorial growth rates (on Month-o-Month basis in per cent) of core sector industries.

* Excerpts from "Core comfort"; The Hindu, August 01, 2023

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ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

INEQUITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE

BACKGROUND: Climate justice activists call for economically developed countries to increase investments in climate adaptation and mitigation. Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, despite contributing the least to global warming, suffer the most from climate disasters and debt distress. North America and Europe, major contributors to global warming, are also creditors in the debt crisis.

Chart 01 | CO2 emissions per capita in 1980 -2021 by various geographical regions (in tonnes per capita)

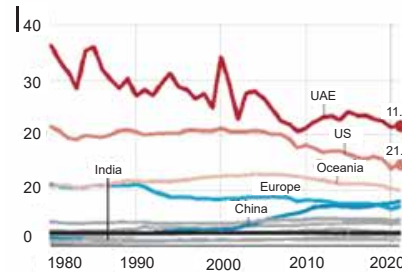


Chart 2 | Total climate investment by each World Bank region as a fraction of that region's total GDP in 2019 and 2020

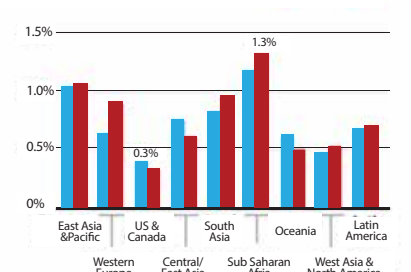


Chart 03 | The chart shows the total approved climate funds and the actual funds disbursed towards each region. The figures are in \$ million

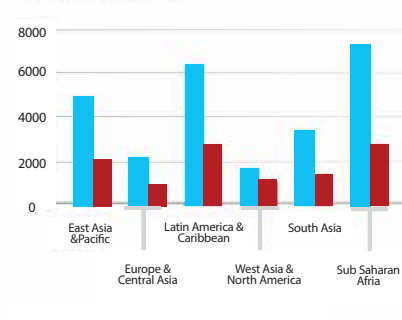
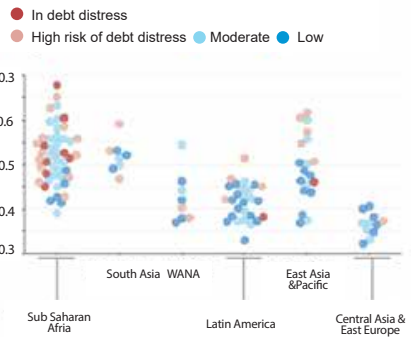


Chart 03 | Climate vulnerability index (vertical axis) for each country and the risk of debt distress by region



* Excerpts from "Climate finance adds another layer of inequity to climate change" The Hindu August 02, 2023

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FOREST (CONSERVATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2023

CONTEXT: Controversial Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 passed Lok Sabha, awaits discussion in Rajya Sabha.

BACKGROUND: The bill seeks to limit conservation scope, provide exemptions for strategic projects in border lands, and permit certain non-forest activities. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) with members from both Houses was formed to review the bill.

How does the Bill restrict the scope of the Act?

1. The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 restricts 'forest' definition to officially recorded areas, contrasting the broader existing Act.
2. Previous Supreme Court ruling recognized forests irrespective of ownership, including "deemed forests" with significant tree cover.
3. States were directed to identify and notify their deemed forests, but delays persist, questioning the process's scientific validity.
4. The amendment allows commercial activity on non-classified lands, potentially impacting the environment and local communities.
5. Current Act includes safeguards like forest clearance permissions and informed consent, which the amendment removes.

6. The revision alters the Act's wide applicability, raising concerns about conservation efforts and environmental protection.

7. Supreme Court's broad interpretation emphasized the importance of forest conservation regardless of ownership.

8. The amendment's potential impact on natural habitats, wildlife, and indigenous communities warrants careful consideration and debate.

Why is the exemption for border infrastructure controversial?

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 exempts certain linear infrastructure projects near the national border from forest clearance permissions. Experts worry that the vague definition of "strategic linear projects" could lead to ecologically damaging projects. The Bill was not referred to the relevant Parliamentary Standing Committee, bypassing oversight protocols.

Did the JPC flag any concerns with the Bill?

The JPC's report on the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 remained unchanged despite objections and dissent notes from various groups. The Bill was not thoroughly discussed in Lok Sabha due to other issues, raising concerns about its impact on forest definition and community rights.

* Excerpts from "What can amended Forest (Conservation) Act change?" *The Hindu* August 02, 2023

CLIMATE ANOMALIES

CONTEXT: July's warmest day in over 100,000 years claim debunked due to indirect temperature estimates from proxies and isotopes.

HIGHLIGHTS: Headlines claiming the warmest day in 100,000 years are scientifically implausible. Temperature estimates from pre-thermometer times rely on "palaeo proxies," which are indirect measures. They involve biological and chemical signals responding to past temperatures compared to modern baselines. Isotope analysis aids in estimating past temperatures based on radioactive decay rates.

Longer and shorter timescales

The "paleo proxy" technique assumes past processes operated like today, but proxies in sediments smooth temperature anomalies over centuries to thousands of years. Only tree rings and marine/terrestrial organisms offer weekly to seasonal estimates. Proxies provide local/regional historical temperature anomalies with uncertainties, making daily timescale temperatures unattainable.

The Holocene epoch

Experts use historical temperature-related anomalies during the Holocene epoch to understand modern humans' response to climate change. Climate events were not always the primary cause of civilization declines. Modern humans' ancestors survived large climatic changes over hundreds of thousands of years. Palaeoclimate provides insights into future climate evolution, but caution is needed in claiming daily temperature records, especially at a global scale.

Endangering climate action

Estimating daily temperatures without thermometer measurements is scientifically impossible. Alarmist claims without scientific rigor risk credibility loss for the climate community. Urging climate action while sacrificing accuracy can damage trust in scientists and governments. This trust is crucial for global climate efforts, commitments, and support for communities affected by climate change.

Paleo Proxy Data: What Is It?

Paleo proxy data refers to indirect evidence of past environmental conditions, obtained from natural archives like ice cores, tree rings, sediment layers, and fossil records.

- **Why and how it is used:** Paleo proxy data helps reconstruct past climate variations and understand long-term environmental changes, providing insights into Earth's history and informing future climate projections.
- **Possibilities:** Offers a glimpse into ancient climates, ecosystem dynamics, and human impacts on the environment, aiding in validating climate models and predicting potential future scenarios.
- **Limitations:** Proxy data may have uncertainties due to dating errors, regional variations, and non-linear relationships with climate parameters, potentially leading to interpretational challenges.
- **Application in the context of India:** Paleo proxy data in India can elucidate historical monsoon patterns, agricultural shifts, and ancient human settlements, contributing to climate adaptation strategies and sustainable development.

* Excerpts from "The holocene climate anomalies" *The Hindu* August 02, 2023

HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

GI TAGS FOR SEVEN NEW PRODUCTS

CONTEXT: The Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag to seven products originating from different regions of India, with four of them hailing from Rajasthan.

The GI tags were given to:

PRODUCTS	FEATURES, STATE	IMAGE
Jalesar Dhatu Shilp (a metal craft)	Decorative metal craft and brassware by Thathera community, Uttar Pradesh	
Goa Mankurad Mango	Named by the Portuguese, Goa	
Goan Bebinca	Known as 'queen of Goan desserts', traditional Indo Portuguese pudding, Goa	
Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft	Weapons embedded with gold and silver wire, Rajasthan	
Bikaner Kashidakari Craft	Textiles with fine stitches and mirror work, Rajasthan	
Jodhpur Bandhej Craft	Art of tying and dyeing, Rajasthan	
Bikaner Usta Kala Craft	Also known as gold <i>nakashi</i> or gold <i>manauti</i> , form of painting that uses gold or silver foil on various surfaces such as wood,	

POLITY

SUPREME INDICTMENT

CONTEXT: Supreme Court criticizes Manipur government for slow investigations into ethnic violence, demands accountability, and proposes a Court-led investigation.

BACKGROUND: The Supreme Court criticizes Manipur government for slow investigations into ongoing ethnic violence. It questions the state police's ability to handle cases and orders the personal presence of the Director General of Police. The court intervenes after women are brutally attacked, prompting proposals for a court-led investigation. The Chief Minister's accountability is in question due to political protection from the BJP.

STORY SO FAR: The history of communal clashes in India indicates state connivance in prolonged mob violence. Swift preventive police action is vital, but Manipur's police allegedly facilitated the violence. Police personnel involved must face legal consequences, and political leadership should address the gravity of the situation. The Opposition grouping, INDIA, seeks a discussion in the Rajya Sabha to present its findings.

Is there a breakdown of law and Order?

- The Manipur government faced criticism for slow investigations into ethnic violence, leading to a lack of arrests.
- The Supreme Court questioned the state police's competence, citing a breakdown in law and constitutional machinery.
- Mob violence continued due to alleged police facilitation, eroding trust in the investigation process.
- Two women's horrifying ordeal highlighted the need for prompt action and intervention by the Court. The Court proposed a Court-led investigation, indicating the severity of the situation.
- Prolonged communal clashes suggest state connivance, making it difficult to bring perpetrators to justice.

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