● **POLITY**   ● **ECONOMICS**   ● **TECHNOLOGY**   ● **ECOLOGY**

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Turnout shows it was right to revoke Article 370: shah

CONTEXT: Amit Shah cites increased voting in Srinagar (14% to 37%) as proof of Article 370's removal benefits.

News Highlights

- **Revocation:** Article 370 revoked in 2019, reducing Jammu and Kashmir to a Union Territory, sparking demand for statehood restoration.
- **Sequence:** Home Minister Shah outlines sequential steps post-revocation: President's Rule, Bill implementation, panchayat polls, delimitation, reservations, Assembly polls, and Statehood.
- **Commitment:** Shah reaffirms Parliament commitment to restore Statehood, citing sanctity of his statement during J&K Bill debate.
- **Significance:** Ongoing polls mark first elections in Kashmir Valley post-Article 370 revocation, indicative of evolving political landscape.
- **Context:** Article 370 granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir before revocation, sparking significant political changes and renewed demands.

Article 370 – UPSC/ Competitive Exam Perspective

Understanding Article 370: Origins, Provisions, and Historical Context

- **Special Status:** Article 370 granted special status to disputed region Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian constitution.
- **Drafted:** N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Constituent Assembly member, drafted Article 370 as a 'temporary provision' in 1949.
- **Autonomy:** Allowed J&K its own constitution, flag, and autonomy except in defence, foreign affairs, and communications.

- **Instrument of Accession:** Based on terms of 1947 Instrument of Accession signed by J&K ruler Hari Singh joining India.
- **Historical Context:** Article 370's origins lie in post-independence circumstances and the disputed status of the region.

Legal Insights on Article 370: Court Rulings and Implications

- **Temporary Provision:** Court confirms Article 370 as temporary, facilitating transitional arrangements and integration amid 1947 war-like situation.
- **Governor's Powers:** Court validates Governor's assumption of state legislature roles, citing SR Bommai case, subject to judicial review in exceptional cases.
- **Presidential Authority:** President can unilaterally notify Article 370's cessation without State government concurrence, as per Constitution provisions.
- **J&K Reorganisation Act:** Court upholds 2019 law, endorsing creation of Ladakh Union Territory from J&K, affirming its legal validity.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India-iran 10-year pact on chabahar faces 'Potential Risk' of sanctions: U.S.

CONTEXT: US State Department warns of potential sanctions on India-Iran Chabahar port agreement, raising doubts about previous exemptions.

BACKGROUND: India's $120 million investment in equipment for the Chabahar port, along with a $250 million credit window, faces scrutiny amid uncertainty over the U.S. extending sanctions exemptions for India. The U.S. State Department highlighted that despite a recent deal between India and Iran, sanctions on Iran persist, cautioning entities against potential sanctions risks.

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U.S.-India Diplomacy: Carve-Outs, Sanctions, and Chabahar Concerns

- **Carve-Out Success:** Trump administrations carve-out in 2018 under IFCA supported India's diplomacy and aid plans for Afghanistan.
- **IFCA Amendments:** IFCA amendments allowed U.S. President to exempt sanctions for humanitarian aid in Iran and assistance for Afghanistan.
- **Oil Import Waiver:** India complied with U.S. demand to halt Iranian oil imports after a six-month waiver expired in 2019.
- **Ministry's Response:** Indian External Affairs Ministry refrains from comment, assessing U.S. remarks for potential impact on Chabahar dealings.
- **Chabahar Study:** Officials analyse U.S. comments for implications on future India-U.S. relations regarding Chabahar port projects.

Chabahar Project: India's Strategic Gateway to Central Asia – UPSC/ Competitive Exam Perspective
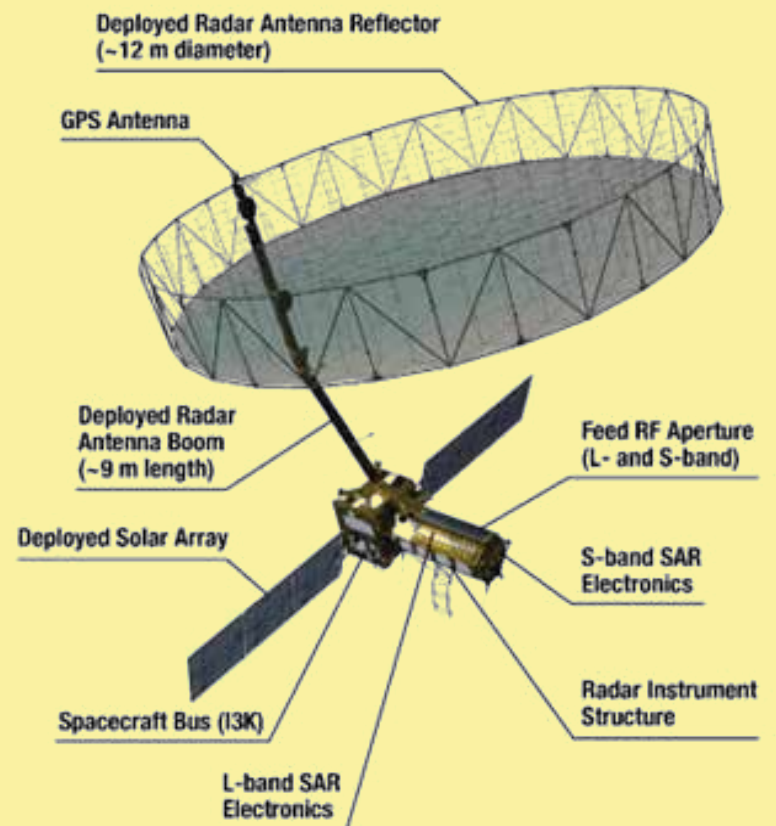
- **Tripartite Agreement:** India, Iran, Afghanistan signed deal in 2016 for Shahid Beheshti Terminal development, India's maiden foreign port project.
- **Transport Corridor:** Aims to establish international transport route, highlighting Chabahar Port construction and rail link to Zahedan.
- **Bypassing Pakistan:** Chabahar enables India to access Afghanistan, Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, crucial due to lack of land access.
- **Trade Hub:** Port facilitates transit trade between India, Iran, Afghanistan, offering alternative route to traditional Silk Road via China.
- **Strategic Significance:** Key for Iran's sanctions relief, offers India alternative route, part of proposed INSTC linking Indian Ocean to Europe.

NISAR satellite can monitor tectonic movements accurately

CONTEXT: ISRO's NISAR satellite, launching soon, will enhance earth monitoring, tracking environmental changes bi-monthly, aiding climate research.

News Highlights: ISRO Chairman S. Somanath revealed that the upcoming NISAR satellite, scheduled for launch later this year, will significantly enhance earth monitoring capabilities by mapping the planet twice a month. The satellite aims to monitor various environmental factors such as water bodies, greenery, agricultural changes, and desertification, aiding in climate-related research alongside other ambitious projects like Spadex and the Gaganyaan mission.

Deployed Radar Antenna Reflector (~12 m diameter)
GPS Antenna
Deployed Radar Antenna Boom (~9 m length)
Deployed Solar Array
Spacecraft Bus (I3K)
L-band SAR Electronics
Feed RF Aperture (L- and S-band)
S-band SAR Electronics
Radar Instrument Structure

NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) – UPSC/ Competitive Exam Perspective

NISAR Mission: Revolutionizing Earth Mapping from Space

- **Cutting-Edge Radar:** NISAR, a pioneering radar, to map Earth's surface using L-band and S-band frequencies with sub-centimetre precision.
- **Joint Partnership:** Collaboration between US and India space agencies, initiated in 2014, culminates in NISAR's development.
- **Upcoming Launch:** Scheduled for January 2024 launch from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, entering near-polar Low Earth Orbit.
- **Extended Operation:** Expected minimum three-year operational lifespan, enhancing global understanding of Earth's dynamic surface.

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- **Global Mapping:** NISAR to complete global mapping in just 12 days, offering unprecedented insights into Earth's surface changes.

NISAR Satellite: Advanced Dual-Frequency Radar Technology

- **Dual-Frequency Capability:** NISAR features L-band and S-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) instruments, enhancing imaging precision and versatility.
- Collaborative Effort: NASA and ISRO contribute to NISAR's development, with NASA providing L-band radar and ISRO supplying S-band radar.
- Advanced Radar Technology: S-band radar's unique wavelength and frequency offer superior weather observation capabilities with minimal attenuation.
- Stationary Antenna Reflector: 39-foot gold-plated wire mesh reflector optimizes radar signal focusing for high-resolution imaging.
- Operational Durations: NASA utilizes L-band radar for global science operations for three years, while ISRO operates S-band radar for five years.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Young people fade away when there is no vision

CONTEXT: Suicide cases in Kota, India, linked to exam stress prompt urgent call to prioritize young people's well-being over academic pressure.

BACKGROUND: The recent suicides of two young individuals in Kota, Rajasthan, known as India's "coaching capital," due to the stress of entrance examinations, highlights a concerning trend nationwide. Pressures from exams and social expectations, including familial, are driving youth to take drastic measures. Urgent action is needed to prioritize the well-being of young people over exam performance, addressing both systemic issues and societal attitudes.

Impact of Coaching Institutes on Youth: Concerns and Consequences

- Basis of Examinations: National Testing Agency adopts NCERT/CBSE syllabus for various entrance exams, ensuring standardized education.
- Rise of Coaching Institutes: Despite benefits, coaching institutes' intense methods create mental and social challenges for students.
- Pressure and Deprivation: Students endure extreme schedules, sacrificing normal childhood experiences, leading to emotional and physical strain.
- Loss of Social Skills: Emphasis on exam preparation limits students' social interactions and communication abilities beyond academic scope.
- Call for Reflection: Questions raised on the purpose of schools if coaching centres compromise students' well-being and holistic development.

Challenges of Common Entrance Tests: Impact on Education System

- CUET Implementation: Delhi University adopts CUET, shifting focus from board marks to entrance test scores, leading to concerns.
- Coaching Culture: Proliferation of coaching centres promises entry into university courses, creating financial burden and academic pressure on parents and students.
- Quality Concerns: Teachers lament decline in student quality post-CUET implementation, citing lack of critical thinking and social skills.
- Need for Reform: Emphasis on coaching-driven admissions overlooks the importance of strengthening government schools and improving infrastructure.
- Call for Balance: While NEET and JEE are rigorous, overreliance on entrance exams neglects the holistic development of students and undermines school education.

Emphasizing Personal Interviews in Entrance Exams

- Value of Personal Interviews: Entrance exams should include personal interviews to assess students' talents and abilities alongside academic scores.
- Holistic Assessment: Class 12 board exam scores and personal talents should complement entrance exam results, fostering a more comprehensive evaluation.
- Success of Personal Interviews: St. Stephen's College exemplifies the effectiveness of personal interviews in assessing students' potential and averting desperation.
- Importance of Sensitivity: Personal interviews require time, attention, and sensitivity from interview panel members to recognize students' worth beyond grades.
- Collective Responsibility: Teachers, parents, policymakers, and parliamentarians should prioritize students' well-being and holistic development in education reform efforts.

Candid notes on the NHRC'S status deferral

CONTEXT: NHRC's status deferral by GANHRI extended for another year despite rejection of NGO plea and India's request.

BACKGROUND: The National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) faces continued deferral of its status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) for another year, despite efforts to lift it. NHRC chairperson Justice Arun Mishra, due to retire soon, faces scrutiny over his leadership amidst concerns about the commission's status downgrade.

Controversy Surrounding NHRC Document on Human Rights

- NHRC Publication: NHRC brochure for 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' mentions Manusmriti, citing ancient Indian texts, sparking controversy over historical discrimination.
- Foundation of Outrage: For many historically disadvantaged Indians, Manusmriti symbolizes discrimination and violence, contrasting with Indian Constitution's values.
- Justice Mishra's Stance: Clarification sought on whether Manusmriti reference reflects Justice Mishra's views or is an oversight, given its conflict with constitutional principles.
- Constitutional Conflict: Mention of Manusmriti raises concerns over its compatibility with Indian Constitution's foundational values and commitment to equality.
- Call for Clarification: Demand for clarification on NHRC's stance regarding Manusmriti's inclusion in the document, highlighting potential implications for human rights discourse.

GANHRI's Concerns Over NHRC Accreditation Status

- Influence Clarification: GANHRI's decision based on India's non-adherence to Paris Principles, not Manusmriti reference, highlighting NHRC's status.
- Accreditation Importance: NHRC emphasizes 'A' status significance for participation in international human rights mechanisms, governed by Paris Principles.
- Paris Principles Criteria: UN's Paris Principles set benchmarks for NHRI accreditation, including mandate, autonomy, independence, pluralism, resources, and investigative powers.
- Past Accreditation: NHRC previously met Paris Principles, maintaining 'A' status, but ongoing doubts indicate ongoing scrutiny by GANHRI.
- Continuing Evaluation: GANHRI's doubts suggest ongoing assessment of NHRC's adherence to Paris Principles, influencing its accreditation status.

The critique underscores the GANHRI evaluation's credibility, challenging India's dismissive stance toward criticism of its human rights record. While External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's defence tactic against such critiques mirrors the global context, the NHRC's ongoing deferral raises questions about both governmental and NHRC accountability and effectiveness.

On the importance of regulatory sandboxes in artificial intelligence

CONTEXT: AI's growth presents opportunities and challenges, prompting governments to explore AI regulatory sandboxes for responsible development.

BACKGROUND: As AI technologies rapidly evolve, the need to address ethical concerns, data privacy issues, and associated risks becomes increasingly urgent. Governments and regulatory bodies are adopting innovative strategies like AI regulatory sandboxes to navigate these challenges while promoting innovation. Striking a balance between fostering AI development and ensuring responsible deployment is crucial for the future of society.

Significance of Regulatory Sandboxes in Global Innovation

- Empirical Insights: Regulatory sandboxes offer policymakers empirical evidence to craft informed responses to emerging technologies' advantages and risks.
- Enhanced Access: Businesses benefit from sandboxes by accessing funding, mitigating information imbalances, and reducing regulatory costs.
- Global Adoption: Originating in the U.K., regulatory sandboxes have expanded globally, with 73 operational in the financial sector across 57 jurisdictions.
- India's Initiatives: Indian financial regulators and Karnataka state have established regulatory sandboxes to promote innovation and regulate emerging technologies.
- Telecommunications Act: India's Telecommunications Act 2023 proposes regulatory sandboxes to promote innovation and technological development in telecommunications.

Regulatory Sandboxes in AI Governance

- Innovative Regulation: Regulatory sandboxes offer controlled environments to test AI technologies, fostering collaboration, transparency, and responsible innovation.
- EU's AI Act: Article 53 of the EU AI Act introduces regulatory sandboxes for testing AI technologies before mainstream adoption.
- Spain's AI Supervision: Spain establishes AESIA, becoming the first European country to regulate AI ahead of EU regulations.
- Global Regulatory Landscape: EU, U.S., U.K., China, and Singapore pursue diverse approaches to regulate and harness AI's potential.
- Competitive Race: Nations globally race to develop comprehensive AI regulation frameworks to address societal

impacts and foster innovation.

India's Progressive AI Regulation

- **NITI Ayog Initiative:** NITI Ayog releases discussion paper and establishes national AI Portal, outlining India's AI strategy.
- **MeitY Report:** MeitY releases AI Innovation 2023 report, emphasizing India's vision through seven working groups.
- **Digital India Act:** Proposed Digital India Act 2023 proposes separate laws for regulating AI, reflecting India's commitment to AI governance.
- **Multifaceted Approach:** India's AI regulation aims at economic growth, ethical considerations, job creation, and societal welfare.
- **Global Leadership:** India, as the chair of GPAI and signatory of the Delhi Declaration, aims to lead AI innovation ethically.

A regulatory sandbox in India is not intended to directly govern AI but rather to precede formal legislation, tailored to the country's needs. By offering a controlled environment for testing, it facilitates risk assessment, framework refinement, and collaboration among stakeholders. This approach positions India as a leader in shaping adaptive regulatory frameworks for AI, balancing innovation with ethical considerations effectively.

- **Manufactured Products:** Deflation in manufactured products narrows to 0.4% in April, from 0.8% in March.
- **Impact:** The surge in wholesale prices reflects mounting inflationary pressures, especially in food and fuel sectors.

Wholesale Price Index– UPSC/ Competitive Exam Perspective

- **Measurement:** WPI tracks price changes of goods sold in bulk from wholesale to business-to-business transactions.
- **Publisher:** Published by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, it's India's primary inflation indicator.
- **Usage:** Widely utilized to gauge inflationary trends in the economy due to its comprehensive coverage of wholesale transactions.
- **Criticism:** Criticized for not reflecting consumer purchasing patterns as it measures wholesale, not retail, prices.
- **Revision:** The base year for All-India WPI was updated from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017 for accuracy.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

Wholesale price inflation hit a 13-month high in april

CONTEXT: Food prices soar with potatoes and onions leading, pushing vegetable inflation to 23.6%, while paddy prices increase over 12%.

Wholesale concern

Wholesale price inflation quickened to 1.26% in April, from March's 0.53%, as food prices surged and fuel and power prices rose by 1.4% after 11 months of deflation

- Price gains in primary food articles accelerated from 6.88% in March to 7.74%
- Month-on-month, WPI inflation was 0.8%, the highest pace since July 2023
- WPI Food Index rose at an eight-month high pace of 5.5%, from 4.65% in March

Highlights

- **High Inflation:** India's wholesale price inflation hits a 13-month high at 1.26% in April, driven by food price surge and fuel costs.
- **Monthly Uptick:** Wholesale Price Index rises by 0.8% month-on-month, primarily due to a 2% increase in primary articles and food prices.
- **Food Inflation:** Primary food articles inflation reaches a four-month high at 7.74%, led by significant price hikes in vegetables, potatoes, and onions.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Rise in public health spending due to states, not centre

CONTEXT: Think tanks suggest India's healthcare spending is nearing 2% of GDP, questioning if credit should go solely to the Union government.

BACKGROUND: While public spending on healthcare in India has risen, attributing it solely to the Union government is inaccurate. The increase is primarily driven by state governments, with the Centre reducing its share of resources to states. Moreover, cuts in the budget for the National Health Mission and a focus on government-funded health insurance schemes raise questions about the prioritization of public health funding.

Health Spending Disparities and Trends in India

- **Disparity in Spending:** India's per capita health spending lags behind Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and BRICS nations by significant margins.
- **State vs. Union Spending:** States and Union Territories lead recent health spending increases, while Union government's spending declines post-pandemic.
- **Factors Influencing Spending:** Increase in health investment during pandemic attributed to States' efforts and GDP decline, not substantial absolute expenditure rise.

Challenges in India's Health Financing

- **State Resource Decline:** Union Health Ministry reduces funds transfer to States, centralizing health finances, weakening State autonomy over healthcare.
- **Stagnant NHM Spending:** NHM expenditure remains static or declines, despite its significance since 2005, impacting health infrastructure and services.

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- Ayushman Bharat Focus: Modi government prioritizes PMJAY, doubling real expenditure between FY15 and FY20, but States bear significant financial burden.
- COVID-19 Impact: Pandemic exposes health system weaknesses, necessitating increased public investment; States respond while Union government's action remains limited.
- Call for Action: Urgent need for equitable health financing, with enhanced support for States to address health system deficiencies.

Public spending on health: States versus Union

The data for public spending on health are sourced from the World Health Organisation, indiabudget.gov.in (Expenditure Budget Vol 1&2) and the National Health Accounts of India

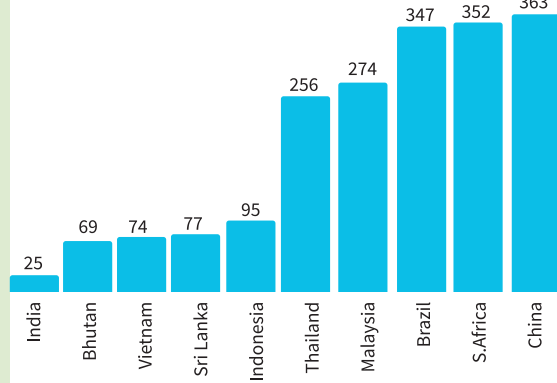**Chart 1:** The chart compares India's per capita public spending on health with other countries (2021) (in $ PPP)

India 25, Bhutan 69, Vietnam 74, Sri Lanka 77, Indonesia 95, Thailand 256, Malaysia 274, Brazil 347, S.Africa 352, China 363

Chart 2: The Union Government's and States' spending on health as a % of GDP

States — Union

States: 0.64, 0.64, 0.68, 0.70, 0.67, 0.70, 0.71, 0.89, 0.96
Union: 0.27, 0.25, 0.23, 0.26, 0.32, 0.30, 0.32, 0.42, 0.37, 0.29, 0.28

(2013-14 ... 2018-19 ... 2023-24)

Note: Union government spending includes spending by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of AYUSH

Chart 3: The chart shows Union Government spending on health from 2019-20 (in ₹ crore)

71,877, 82,820, 83,781, 72,433, 74,236, 77,252

Financial year
2019-20   2021-22   2023-24 RE   2024-25 BE

Chart 4: The chart shows the share transferred to the States by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (%)
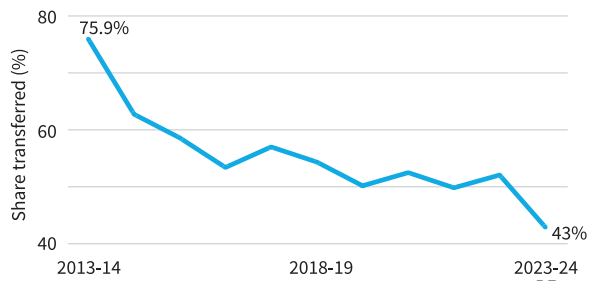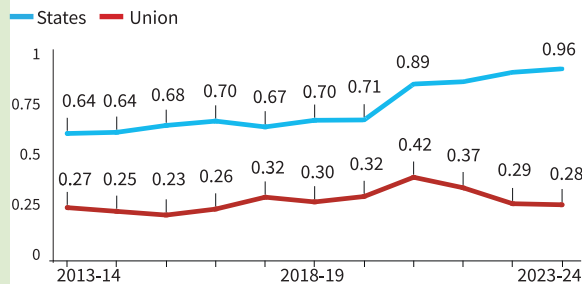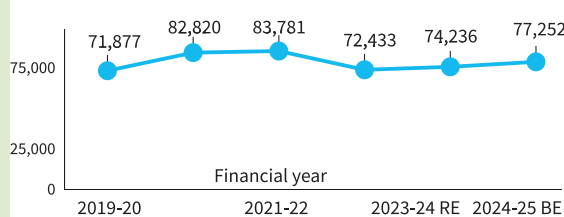
Share transferred (%)

75.9% ... 43%

2013-14 ... 2018-19 ... 2023-24 BE

Chart 5: The chart shows Union government expenditure on National Health Mission in ₹ crore (in constant prices)

18,039, 18,247, 17,741, 19,151, 25,405, 23,994, 25,693, 22,035, 23,791, 20,421

2013-14 ... 2018-19 ... 2023-24

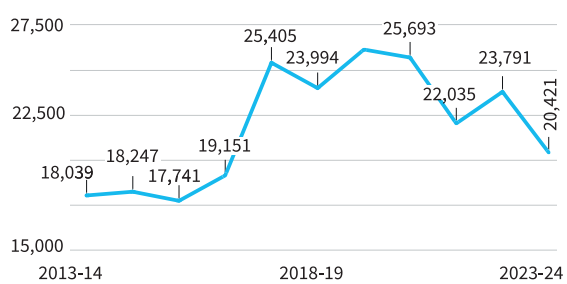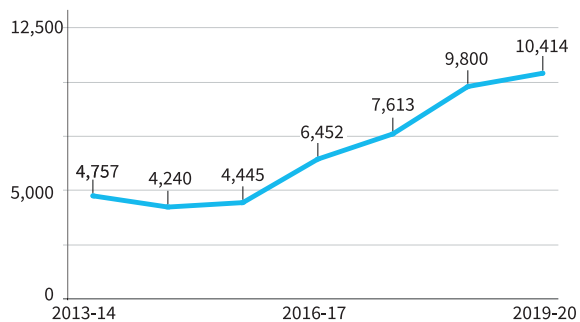**Chart 6:** Union and State spending on government-funded health insurance schemes in ₹ crore (in constant 2013-14 prices)

4,757, 4,240, 4,445, 6,452, 7,613, 9,800, 10,414

2013-14 ... 2016-17 ... 2019-20

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