

DAILY PT POINTERS

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The Hindu-Economy (GSIII)-Page 1

Core sector output growth spurts to 6.7% in Feb.

Double-digit upticks in the natural gas, cement, coal industries lead to three-month high levels

Fertilizers saw a fall of 9.5%; this is the second month in a row that output has taken a tumble

As both Union and State governments rush to meet targets, infrastructure will stay at 6% in March too

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

fertilizers' output dipped year-on-year, and marks the first such streak in two years.

India's eight core sectors' output growth spurts to a three-month high of 6.7% in February, led by double-digit upticks in coal, natural gas and cement even as fertilizers' production fell 9.5% to record the sharpest contraction since May 2021.

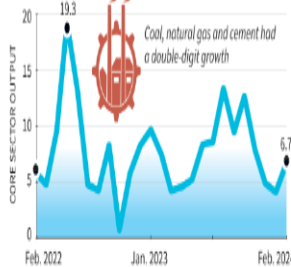
January's Index of Core Industries (ICI) was revised to reflect a 4.1% rise, compared with the previous estimate of 3.6%, but that remained the slowest growth in 15 months. This is the se-

In absolute terms, overall output levels were at a three-month low and 4.9% below January's levels, which had marked a ten-month high. In sequential terms, the only segment to record an uptick over January's production level was cement (up 1.74%).

Crude oil production
In year-on-year terms, crude oil production grew at an all-time high pace of 7.9% in February, although

Core growth

The output growth of India's eight core sectors rose to a three-month high of 6.7% in February



facts as output had dropped 4.9% in the same month last year.

Natural gas output grew 11.3%, which was the high-

est in February also marked a four-month peak for cement (10.2%), electricity (6.3%), and coal (11.6%).

Pre-poll splurge lifts fiscal deficit

NEW DELHI

Signalling a sharp rise in spending ahead of the fiscal year-end, the Centre's fiscal deficit soared from 64% of the revised estimates in January to 86.5% by the end of February. The deficit hit ₹15 lakh crore in the first eleven months of 2023-24 » PAGE 13

growth eased slightly to 8.4% in February, refinery products recovered from a 4.3% contraction in January to rise 2.6%.

age of slightly over 40% in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), economists expect industrial output growth to recover from the 3.8% uptick recorded in January.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar reckoned the IIP would record an expansion of 6%-6.5% in the month of February, while Bank of Baroda's chief economist Madan Sabnavis pegged it in the range of 4% to 5%.

"The 6.7% uptick in February reversed the declining trend seen in December and January and

2023-24 has been smart at 7.7%, coming over the 6.8% growth last year," Mr. Sabnavis said.

CareEdge Ratings' chief economist Rajani Sinha said IIP growth may pick up to around 5.5% in February, while India Ratings and Research projected it to rise 5%.

As both the Union and State governments rushed to meet their capex targets in March, the core infrastructure sectors' growth is expected to stay around 6% this month as well, said India Ratings' economists Sunil Kumar Sinha and Pa-

- The ICI measures combined and individual performance of production of eight core industries viz. Cement, Coal, Crude Oil, Electricity, Fertilizers, Natural Gas, Refinery Products and Steel.
- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 percent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

The Hindu-GS3(Space)Page 4

Skyroot Aerospace successfully test-fires stage-2 of Vikram-1 launch vehicle in A.P.'s Sriharikota

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

Leading space-tech company Skyroot Aerospace on Wednesday successfully test-fired stage-2 of its Vikram-1 launch vehicle at the propulsion testbed of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh



Kalam-250, the second stage of Vikram-1 launch vehicle, being test

for the Indian space sector as it will be the country's first private orbital rocket launch.

It follows the suborbital launch of India's first private rocket – the Vikram-S by Skyroot in November 2022, said an official press release.

The test, which lasted 85 seconds, recorded a peak sea-level thrust of 186 kilonewtons (kN) which

rocket motor, which uses solid fuel and a high-performance Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymers Thermal Protection System.

Stage-2 of the launch vehicle houses a carbon ablative flex nozzle along with high-precision electro-mechanical actuators for thrust vector control of the vehicle, which helps the rocket achieve the de-

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- Launch vehicles comprise multiple stages.
- Stage-2, called Kalam-250, is critical during the ascent of the launch vehicle since it will propel the rocket through the earth's atmosphere and into the vacuum of space.
- The Vikram-1 launch will be a landmark event for the Indian space sector as it will be the country's first private orbital rocket launch. It follows the suborbital launch of India's first private rocket — the Vikram-S by Skyroot in November 2022
- The Kalam-250 is a high-strength carbon composite rocket motor, which uses solid fuel and a high-performance Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymers Thermal Protection System.

'Child accused of POCSO offence to be tried as per the JJ Act'

- The Kerala High Court has held that a child charged with the offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is to be prosecuted as per the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act.
- The court observed that "Child" was not defined in the POCSO Act whereas it is defined in the JJ Act, 2015.
- Section 2(12) of the JJ Act, defined a child to be a person who has not completed 18 years of age.
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The Hindu-Polity and Governance(GSII)-Page 9

Measuring internet freedom in India in the last 10 years

How do internet shutdowns affect the daily lives of citizens, particularly in regions where they are frequently imposed? What are the primary reasons cited by the Indian government for imposing internet shutdowns?

Gautam Nirmal Doshi
Saumya Kalia
Rhea Gupta

The story so far:

For five straight years, India has topped the global list of countries imposing internet bans, with about 60% of all blackouts recorded in the world, between 2016 and 2022 having been in India. State imposed shutdowns in the last decade have cited national security and threats to public order. However, rights groups have argued that these shutdowns also violate court directives.

Internet shutdowns

The Indian government imposed a total of 780 shutdowns between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2023, according to data collected by the Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC). Shutdowns flared up during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019, the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, and the

introduction of Farm Bills in 2020. Internet disruptions in India accounted for more than 70% of the total loss to the global economy in 2020. Data shows India shut down the internet for over 7,000 hours in 2023.

Indian States and Union Territories can impose an internet shutdown only in case of a "public emergency" or in the interest of "public safety", according to the Indian Telegraph Act. However, the law does not define what qualifies as an emergency or safety issue. The Supreme Court, in the landmark *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India* case, reiterated that internet shutdowns violate fundamental rights to freedom of expression and shutdowns lasting indefinitely are unconstitutional. Moreover, Courts have asked governments to make shutdown orders public, a provision poorly complied with, experts have noted.

British-era law

Regionally, Jammu and Kashmir saw the highest number of shutdowns – at 433 –

in the last 12 years. The longest blackout in 2023 took place in Manipur from May to December, amid ethnic clashes.

As of February 15 this year, internet shutdowns were active in Haryana amid the farmers' protests.

The Union government invoked powers under a British-era law to suspend mobile internet as Punjab farmers are holding protests in Delhi.

Activists have pointed out that India failed to meet the 'three-part test' in imposing blackouts in J&K and Manipur. Under international law, to block any access to content or invoke coercive measures that violate people's fundamental rights, countries should check if the action is provided for by law; pursues a legitimate aim; and follows standards of necessity and proportionality. The majority of internet outages in the last decade were localised to specific districts, cities and villages.

The trends differ globally: protests are the most common reason for internet shutdowns, followed by information

control and political instability.

Between 2015 and 2022, more than 55,000 websites were blocked, according to SFLC data. The biggest share of content censored was done under section 69A of the IT Act, by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. URLs were blocked due to links to organisations banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Recently, the Ministry ordered news outlet *The Caravan* to take down a story which alleged abuse, torture, and murder of civilians by the Indian Army in Jammu's Poonch district.

On social media, almost 30,000 social media URLs (including accounts and posts) were blocked between 2018 and 2022, with the majority of requests sent to X.

A commonly cited reason for blocking websites is the escalating threat of cybercrime. As compared to 5,693 cases in 2013, India recorded more than 65,000 cases last year. Cases have risen by almost 434% between 2016 and 2022, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

India and global trends

Global Internet freedom has declined for the 13th consecutive year, and the environment for human rights online has deteriorated in 29 countries, according to the latest Freedom House report. India's ranking has hovered around the same benchmark in the last three years. This is a dip from 2016 and 2017, when India scored 59 points, to 50 points in 2023.

THE GIST

India has consistently topped the global list of countries imposing internet bans, with approximately 60% of all recorded blackouts worldwide.

Shutdowns have been implemented citing reasons such as national security and threats to public order, with notable instances during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the abrogation of Article 370, and the introduction of Farm Bills.

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The Hindu: Governance(GSII)/Internal Security(GSIII)-Page 12

Govt. extends AFSPA in parts of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Thursday extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in parts of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh for another six months.

As per the notification, the AFSPA has been extended in the whole of eight districts and 21 police stations in five other districts of Nagaland. In Arunachal Pradesh, it has been extended in three districts and areas falling under the jurisdiction of three police stations in Namsai district.

In Nagaland, the notification issued under Section 3 of the AFSPA for a period of six months with effect from April 1, "unless withdrawn earlier", will be effective in Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima,

Mon, Kiphire, Noklak Phek and Peren district; and in Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza and Kezocha police stations in Kohima district; Mangkolemba, Mokochung-I, Longtho, Tuli Longchem and Anaki 'C' police stations in Mokochung district; Yanglolo police station in Longleng district; Bhandari, Champang and Ralan police stations in Wokha district and Ghatashi, Pughoboto Satakha, Suruhuto, Zunheboto and Aghunato police stations in Zunheboto district.

The AFSPA has been extended in Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district along the Assam border for another six months.

AFSPA gives armed forces the power to maintain public order in "disturbed areas". They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law. If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search a premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.

Do you know ?

A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification under Section 3 of the AFSPA. An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities. The Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.

The Hindu: International Reports(GSII)-Page 14

Households across the world waste 1 billion meals a day, says UN report

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Households across the globe wasted over one billion meals a day in 2022, even as 783 million people struggled with hunger and a third of humanity faced food insecurity, according to the Food Waste Index Report 2024, a study jointly authored by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), a U.K.-based non-profit.

The report, released ahead of the International Day of Zero Waste (March 30), noted that in 2022, there were 1.05 billion tonnes of food waste generated (including inedible parts), amounting to 132 kilograms per capita and almost one-fifth of all food available to consumers. “Out of the total food wast-



Rural areas generally wasted less food, the report said.

ed in 2022, 60% happened at the household level, with food services responsible for 28%, and retail 12%,” the report observed.

The report stressed the importance of expanding and strengthening data infrastructure to enable the tracking and monitoring of food waste, pointing out that “many low- and middle-income countries continue to lack adequate systems for tracking progress

to meet Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 of halving food waste by 2030, particularly in retail and food services”. At present, only four G-20 countries (Australia, Japan, U.K., U.S.) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for tracking progress to 2030.

Contrary to popular perception, food waste was not a “rich country problem”, the report stated, with observed average levels of household food waste for high-income, upper-middle, and lower-middle-income countries differing by just 7 kg per capita. “Hotter countries appear to generate more food waste per capita in households, potentially due to higher consumption of fresh foods with substantial inedible parts and a lack of robust cold chains,” the report noted.

Detailing the link between food waste and climate change, the report found that food loss and waste generated “8%-10% of annual global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – almost five times that of the aviation sector – and significant biodiversity loss by taking up the equivalent of almost a third of the world’s agricultural land”. It estimated the toll of both food loss and waste on the global economy at \$1 trillion.

Another trend revealed by the data was that compared to urban areas, rural ones generally wasted less food, due to “greater diversion of food scraps to pets, livestock, and home composting”. The report urged governments to “raise climate ambition by integrating food loss and waste” into their Nationally Determined Contributions.

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HEADLINES OF THE DAY



Indian Express: Health(GSII)-Page 9

Clinical trials of Spanish tuberculosis vaccine MTBVAC begin in India

Bharat Biotech has started Phase 3 trials of the first live attenuated vaccine of Mycobacterium TB isolated from a human strain, Spanish biopharma firm Biofabri has completed Phase 1-2 in other countries

Bharat Biotech International Limited, in collaboration with Biofabri, has started a series of clinical trials in adults in the country to evaluate the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy of MTBVAC- the first vaccine against tuberculosis derived from a human source.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



Indian Express:Health(GSII)/S&T(GSIII) Page 13

How the H5N1 bird flu threatens the very existence of birds and mammals

The worst affected are marine mammals. More than 20,000 sea lions and a handful of dolphins have died in Chile and Peru due to the infection. There have been reports of deaths of seals on the east and west coasts of the US.

- Bird flu, also known as avian flu, refers to an infectious viral illness that mainly infects and spreads among poultry and some wild birds.
- There are different strains of bird flu virus, which have been circulating for a very long time among at least 100 bird species,
- Since 2020, a highly pathogenic type of bird flu, H5N1, has been spreading across the globe, posing an existential threat to birds and wildlife.
- The virus has infected birds in more than 80 countries (as of December 2023) .

Governor's assent to state laws

Kerala has moved the SC against the withholding of assent to Bills by the President and Governor. Over the past year, several Opposition-ruled states have approached the court over the same issue

- Article 200 of the Constitution states that after a Bill has been passed by the state legislature, “it shall be presented to the Governor”. The Governor, then, has options: give assent to the Bill, withhold assent, or reserve the Bill for consideration by the President.
- In situations where a Bill is sent to the President for consideration, the President can either give or withhold assent. This is dealt with in Article 201.
- If assent is withheld, the President requests the Governor to return the Bill to the state legislature for reconsideration.
 - The state government then has six months to reconsider the Bill — failing to do so results in its lapsing.
- If the Bill is passed once again by the state legislature, it must be sent back to the President who, unlike the Governor, is under no obligation to give assent when assessing the reconsidered Bill.