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1. Unemployment data based on draft report

NITI Aayog officials debunk media report of 6.1% joblessness

The government’s think tank NITI Aayog debunked claims that unemployment in 2017-18 was at a 45-year high. The NITI Aayog said the report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), cited as the source for the report, was in fact a draft and not approved by the government.



Mirrors 1972

According to the NSSO’s periodic labour force survey —the unemployment rate was 6.1% in 2017-18. The only year of comparable data when the unemployment rate was higher was in 1972-73. It was at 2.2% in 2011-12.

The NSSO report is a matter of much controversy, with the two external members of the National Statistical Commission citing the delay in its release as a major reason for their resignations.

The data reportedly showed that joblessness was higher in urban India (7.8%) than in rural India (5.3%). Within this, it stood at 17.4% for rural males and 13.6% for rural females. In urban India, joblessness was at 18.7% among males and a huge 27.2% among females.

Importantly, the data reportedly showed that the labour force participation rate (LFPR), the measure of people working or looking for jobs, declined from 39.5% in 2011-12 to 36.9% in 2017-18. This phenomenon — of unemployment rising while the LFPR dipped — is a cause for serious worry, explaining that it probably shows that people are simply giving up on finding jobs and have stopped seeking work.

Note



2. Giant cavity in Antarctic glacier signals rapid decay

The 300-metre-tall gap can hold 14 billion tonnes of ice

NASA scientists have discovered a gigantic cavity, almost 300 metres tall, growing at the bottom of the **Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctica**, indicating rapid decay of the ice sheet and acceleration in global sea levels due to climate change.

The findings, published in the journal *Science Advances*, highlight the need for detailed observations of Antarctic glaciers' undersides in calculating how fast sea levels will rise in response to warming.

Researchers expected to find some gaps between ice and bedrock at Thwaites' bottom, where ocean water could flow in and melt the glacier from below.

The size and explosive growth rate of the hole, however, is surprising. It is big enough to have contained 14 billion tonnes of ice, and most of that ice melted over the last three years.

It has been suspected for years that Thwaites was not tightly attached to the bedrock beneath. The cavity was revealed by ice-penetrating radar in NASA's Operation IceBridge, an airborne campaign beginning in 2010 that studies connections between the polar regions and the global climate.



3. Denisovans may have been jewellers: study

Bone tools, beads and bracelets found

A rare species of primitive human roamed the forests of Eurasia 200,000 years ago and may have made tools and even jewellery, according to new research.

Denisovans – a cousin of Neanderthals — were discovered in 2010 when scientists working in a cave in southern Siberia obtained a finger bone of a girl belonging to a previously unidentified group of humans.

Because they have so far only been located at the Denisova Cave, far less is known about them than their more famous relatives Neanderthals, who executed sophisticated hunting strategies in groups, made fire, tools and clothing.

Papers published in the journal *Nature*, two international teams of scientists now argue Denisovans inhabited the cave as far back as 2,00,000 years ago.

To arrive at that conclusion they needed to overcome several hurdles that make dating prototypical man especially tricky.

Note



The big challenge is that the human remains themselves are microscopic — the biggest one is 2 cm high and they are really difficult to date because they all fall either just at or beyond the reach of radiocarbon dating.

As well as human remains, researchers found perforated animal teeth possibly used as necklaces, bone tools, ostrich shell beads and stone-worked bracelets.



4. Digging for the future reveals remains from the past

Work for farmers' institution stopped as excavators hit 1894 Assam peasant martyrs' mass grave

A project expected to change the future of farmers in Assam's Darrang district had to be suspended after excavators dug up the locals' emotional link with the past — a mass grave of 140 peasants killed in a farmers' revolt 123 years ago.



positive outcome of the inadvertent incident is that there is attention on the mass grave area that was in a state of neglect.

Historical Background:

The uprising was triggered by a British government decision in 1893 to increase agricultural tax by 70-80%. At least 140 peasants died in police firing after the protests turned violent in Darrang district's Patharughat, about 60 km northeast of Guwahati, on January 28, 1894.

The spot believed to be the mass grave place was cordoned off and construction activities stopped.

There is no monumental evidence of the spot having been the mass grave of the martyrs of the 1894 revolution. A

Note

5. People leaving low quality jobs

Evidence of job creation, says NITI Aayog chief

According to NITI Aayog and NSSO Nearly 7.8 million jobs have been created. The real scenario that has to be taken into account is that people leaving the low quality jobs, creating adequate number of jobs for new



entrants. The problem seems to be the quality of jobs.

India needs about seven million jobs and enough jobs have been created for new entrants.

The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) of unemployment being at a 45-year high.

The government in fact had evidence of increasing job creation. Stating that the NSSO report was only a draft that had not been approved by the government.

Even with the release of the back series GDP data, it was NITI Aayog that did it. It is clear the government is not happy with the numbers the Central Statistics Office is putting out.

6. Health sector seeks tax breaks for middle class in Budget

The healthcare sector wants the government's interim Budget to include tax measures to help the middle class better mitigate health risks.

"Ayushman Bharat for the financially weaker section took centre stage in healthcare last year; however, the middle class is still at risk!"

A first step to universal health coverage would be to increase deduction for medical insurance premium under section 80D for self, family and dependant parents. An enhancement in the medical allowance for salaried employees in line with inflation and a separate deduction in respect of preventive health checks would be desirable.

We look forward to zero-rating of GST for the sector, or for normalisation of the GST rates for services consumed by the healthcare service providers at 5%," Ms. Reddy added.

A reduction in the cost of medical equipment that will help in increasing the outreach of telemedicine and home healthcare facilities. This, in turn, will help in the preventive and timely treatment of non-communicable diseases that are expected to account for 75% of the country's diseases by 2025."

The last year had been a challenging one for India's private healthcare providers, with multiple headwinds impacting growth and profitability. The overall sector had become less attractive for investments, the absence of which had hindered growth significantly.

However, given that more than two-thirds of the sector was driven by private operators, the government had to increase its willingness to partner with the private sector players.



Note

