

Discipline
is the **bridge**
between
goals and
accomplishments.

Important Issues of the Day

- **Lok Sabha seats – Page No. 1, GS 2**
- **Rise of medicalisation – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Women’s empowerment – Page No.6 , GS 1**
- **India’s heat crisis – Page No.6 , GS 3**
- **Food waste – Page No. 7, GS 3**
- **Windfall Tax – Prelims**
- **Exercise Dustlik – Prelims**

Centre moots inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on 2011 Census

Govt. circulates drafts of Constitution Amendment Bill and Delimitation Bill

If proposals are accepted, share of Lok Sabha seats of southern States will shrink

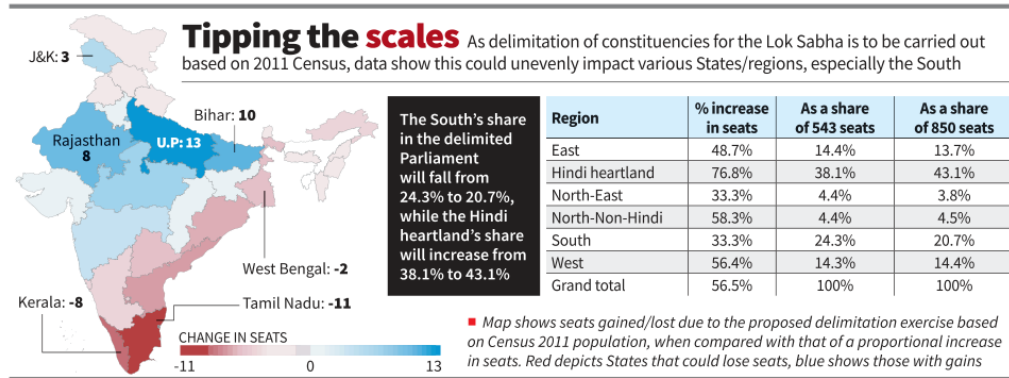
The Bills propose to raise strength of Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats

Varghese K. George
Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

States that have stabilised their populations could see their share of representation in Parliament shrinking if proposals in the drafts of a Constitution Amendment Bill and a Delimitation Bill circulated by the Centre become law.

The Budget Session is reconvening on Thursday to consider the Constitution (131st) Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill, which the government says are aimed at expediting the implementation of 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.

The Congress said the government was using women's reservation as a facade to railroad inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats without consultation, and ahead of the 2029 general election. "We will oppose this backdoor delimitation. We are 100% for women's reservation and demand its immediate implementation within the existing strength of the Lok Sabha and Assemblies," Congress MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi said. "In the



Stalin warns of massive protest

T.N. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin warned of a massive protest that would bring the State to a standstill if the Centre decided on delimitation affecting southern States and offering more political power to northern States.



proposals there is not a whisper of the repeated assurance by the government that the inter-State seat distribution percentages will remain intact."

The proposals emphatically seek to change the

Build consensus, Revanth tells PM

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling for a national consensus on the proposed rise in seats and urging immediate implementation of women's reservation without linking it to seat expansion.



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Dangerous shift: Siddaramaiah

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah opposed the proposal, saying, "If numerical strength begins to determine power, the need for broad-based support across the country will diminish. That is a dangerous shift."



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Attempt to divide India: Mamata

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said the BJP-led Union govt. has tabled the Delimitation Bill to divide West Bengal and India at large. They are doing it to gain political mileage, she said.



significant inter-State and intra-State population shifts." The draft Delimitation Bill mandates that "it shall be the duty of the Commission to readjust, on the basis of the latest census figures, the alloca-

tion of seats in the House of the People to the States."

If these proposals are enacted, the Hindi heartland States will see their share of Lok Sabha seats rise from 38.1% to 43.1%, while the southern States will see theirs shrink from 24.3% to 20.7%.

In combination, the Bills propose an inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on the latest Census figures and an increase in the size of the Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats – 815 for States and 35 for Union Territories – against the current ceiling of 550, while carving out 33% for women.

Under the existing constitutional scheme, Lok Sabha seats are distributed between States on the basis of the 1971 Census and within each State on the basis of the 2001 Census. Article 82 provides that this arrangement will continue "until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published".

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- **The proposals emphatically seek to change the seat distribution — indeed, that is stated in the objects and reasons of the Constitutional Amendment Bill itself.**

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- **Article 82 provides that this arrangement will continue “until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published”.**
- The States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Punjab had demanded an extension of the existing freeze for another 25 years beyond 2026.
- While all large States will receive some additional seats in the Lok Sabha, assuming all 815 permitted seats are allocated, some will see their strength rise dramatically. Uttar Pradesh will gain 58 seats over its current 80, while Kerala will gain only three, taking it from 20 to 23, if 815 seats are distributed according to the 2011 population distribution.
- U.P.’s share of the Lok Sabha will rise from 14.73% to 16.24%, while Kerala’s will shrink from 3.68% to 2.7%. Bihar will move from 40 seats (7.37%) to 72 seats (8.47%); Maharashtra from 48 to 78; and Tamil Nadu from 39 to 50 — a reduction in its current share from 7.18% to 5.88%.

Mains Question

“The delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies may intensify the North-South divide in India.” Examine this statement with suitable arguments.

“लोकसभा निर्वाचन क्षेत्रों का परिसीमन भारत में उत्तर-दक्षिण विभाजन को और गहरा कर सकता है।” उपयुक्त तर्कों के साथ इस कथन की परीक्षा कीजिए।

The alarming rise of medicalisation in India

Page No. 6, GS 2

The recent announcement by Air India, hinting at possible pay cuts or even de-rostering for crew members with a higher Body Mass Index (BMI), may, at first glance, appear to be a prudent and well-intentioned step toward ensuring fitness and operational safety. Aviation, after all, is a profession where physical readiness is essential. Yet, the timing of this decision – coinciding with the week an anti-obesity drug, semaglutide, went off patent and nearly 40 products entered the Indian market – signals something deeper.

India today faces a mounting burden of obesity and associated metabolic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, fatty liver disease, and dyslipidaemia. Nearly a quarter of Indians are overweight or obese. One in 10 adults live with diabetes, one in three with hypertension, and a substantial proportion has fatty liver disease. Even more concerning is the rapid rise of obesity among children. The causes, which are neither obscure nor debated, include the proliferation of ultra-processed or high fat, salt and sugar-content foods, and increasingly sedentary lifestyles shaped by urban work patterns, shrinking open spaces, chronic stress, alcohol consumption, and inadequate sleep. Compounding this is a genetic predisposition among Indians and South Asians toward excess body fat despite a seemingly lean appearance – the so-called “thin-fat” phenotype.

Historically, in a society long shaped by undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, excess weight was once perceived as a marker of prosperity. Consequently, as overweight and obesity began rising over the past two decades, public discourse remained muted, almost reluctant to confront this emerging reality.

Then came the pharmaceutical response. Around this time last year, another anti-obesity drug, tirzepatide, entered the Indian market and rapidly became one of its highest-selling medications. Its commercial success revealed not just clinical demand but also the emergence of a vast and lucrative therapeutic marketplace. With semaglutide now available at a remarkably lower cost, the market potential has expanded further.

Sustained marketing campaign

Over the past year, however, a more troubling pattern has emerged. Prescription medicines cannot be directly advertised to the public, yet pharmaceutical companies have grown adept at navigating these constraints. Surrogate advertising – often framed as public awareness campaigns – has become increasingly sophisticated. In the past year, the country witnessed full page newspaper campaigns, and billboards at major urban areas regarding obesity;



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One of the most fundamental drivers of the obesity epidemic – the expansion of ultra-processed foods – receives comparatively limited attention

influencer endorsements for medical products; and sponsored features that resemble independent journalism, subtly shape public perception without explicitly naming the drugs.

Regulatory responses lagged behind. The restraint from the government on newspaper ads and billboards came only a year later.

The messaging on drugs from pharmaceuticals is rarely overt; instead, it is nuanced, persistent, and highly effective, gradually reshaping both public expectations and clinical practice. In such an environment, the boundary between genuine scientific advancement and commercial enthusiasm begins to blur. New drugs are presented as transformative breakthroughs, while their uncertainties receive far less attention.

The less talked about side effects

Anti-obesity medications, particularly those acting on GLP-1 pathways, are associated not only with fat loss but also with a reduction in lean muscle mass – a condition known as sarcopenia. As there is loss of fat from the body, nearly 25% to 40% is contributed by the loss of muscle mass – an unintended but serious consequence. By suppressing appetite and reducing caloric intake, these drugs can inadvertently lead to muscle loss unless accompanied by adequate protein intake and structured physical activity, especially resistance training. Sarcopenia in this context is no longer a theoretical concern. It has been documented in clinical trials and is supported by emerging real-world evidence. Yet, amid the celebration of weight loss outcomes, such risks are often understated. Individuals may achieve a lower BMI while compromising strength, metabolic resilience, and long-term health.

The trajectory does not end there. Sarcopenia itself is now emerging as a new therapeutic target. Pharmaceutical pipelines already include drugs aimed at preventing or reversing muscle loss, many in advanced stages of development. It requires little imagination to foresee the next phase – a population using anti-obesity medicines, along with additional therapies to manage the very consequences these drugs produce. What we are witnessing here is a cascading logic: one intervention begets another, each addressing the unintended consequences of the previous one. It is a self-reinforcing cycle sustained by scientific innovation, commercial incentives, and a growing societal preference for quick pharmacological solutions over sustained behavioural change.

Perhaps what is most disquieting is the evolving role of professional medical bodies within this ecosystem both globally, and increasingly in India. Clinical guidelines are being

updated with growing frequency, sometimes annually, often generating anticipation around new therapies. The interval between a drug's introduction and its inclusion in standard treatment protocols appears to be shrinking. Inclusion in such guidelines almost guarantees widespread adoption and commercial success.

While scientific progress must be embraced, the pace of endorsement raises important questions: are these recommendations grounded in robust, long-term evidence, or are they shaped by the forces influencing markets and public discourse?

Meanwhile, one of the most fundamental drivers of the obesity epidemic – the rapid expansion of ultra-processed foods – receives comparatively limited attention. In India, this sector has grown at an annual rate of around 13% between 2011 and 2021. These products, aggressively marketed and widely accessible, shape dietary habits from an early age, fuelling the very conditions the pharmaceutical industry seeks to treat. Yet policy responses remain hesitant. Front-of-package warning labels, for instance, continue to face delays.

Thus, we inhabit a deeply paradoxical ecosystem. One industry promotes consumption patterns that drive metabolic disease. Another offers pharmaceutical remedies. A third emerges to treat the side effects of those remedies. From a market perspective, this system is efficient, profitable, and self-sustaining. From a public health perspective, it is profoundly misaligned with the goal of durable well-being.

Shift in perspective

Reclaiming the narrative of health demands a shift in perspective. Medicines must be recognised as adjuncts, and not substitutes, for foundational interventions such as a nourishing diet, increased physical activity, sufficient and restorative sleep, and stress management. Greater transparency about the risks of newer therapies is not just desirable but absolutely essential. At the same time, there must be stronger, evidence-based advocacy to restore lifestyle modification to the centre of clinical care. The medical profession must, above all, reaffirm its ethical compass.

Encouraging fitness among airline crew is not misguided. But if such measures become yet another entry point into a cycle of measurement, medication, and market-driven dependence, we risk losing sight of what health truly means. Anti-obesity drugs are not the destination; they are a signal revealing how deeply medicalisation is embedding itself into everyday life. This is a moment to pause, recalibrate, and reclaim health before medicine begins to define it.

- **The recent announcement by Air India, hinting at possible pay cuts or even de-rostering for crew members with a higher Body Mass Index (BMI), may, at first glance, appear to be a prudent and well-intentioned step toward ensuring fitness and operational safety.**
- **Aviation, after all, is a profession where physical readiness is essential.**
- **Yet, the timing of this decision —coinciding with the week an anti-obesity drug, semaglutide, went off patent and nearly 40 products entered the Indian market— signals something deeper.**
- **India today faces a mounting burden of obesity and associated metabolic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, fatty liver disease, and dyslipidaemia.**

- **Nearly a quarter of Indians are overweight or obese. One in 10 adults live with diabetes, one in three with hypertension, and a substantial proportion has fatty liver disease.**
- **Even more concerning is the rapid rise of obesity among children.**
- **The causes, which are neither obscure nor debated, include the proliferation of ultra-processed or high fat, salt and sugar-content foods, and increasingly sedentary lifestyles shaped by urban work patterns, shrinking open spaces, chronic stress, alcohol consumption, and inadequate sleep.**
- **Compounding this is a genetic predisposition among Indians and South Asians toward excess body fat despite a seemingly lean appearance — the so-called “thin-fat” phenotype.**

- **Historically, in a society long shaped by undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, excess weight was once perceived as a marker of prosperity. Consequently, as overweight and obesity began rising over the past two decades, public discourse remained muted, almost reluctant to confront this emerging reality.**
- **Then came the pharmaceutical response. Around this time last year, another anti-obesity drug, tirzepatide, entered the Indian market and rapidly became one of its highest-selling medications.**
- **Prescription medicines cannot be directly advertised to the public, yet pharmaceutical companies have grown adept at navigating these constraints.**
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- **By suppressing appetite and reducing caloric intake, these drugs can inadvertently lead to muscle loss unless accompanied by adequate protein intake and structured physical activity, especially resistance training.**
- **Meanwhile, one of the most fundamental drivers of the obesity epidemic — the rapid expansion of ultra-processed foods — receives comparatively limited attention. In India, this sector has grown at an annual rate of around 13% between 2011 and 2021.**

Mains Question

“Obesity is emerging as a major public health challenge in India, driven by rapid urbanization, lifestyle changes, and dietary transitions.” Discuss its causes and socio-economic implications.

“मोटापा भारत में एक प्रमुख सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य चुनौती के रूप में उभर रहा है, जिसका कारण तीव्र शहरीकरण, जीवनशैली में बदलाव और आहार संबंधी परिवर्तन हैं।” इसके कारणों और सामाजिक-आर्थिक प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए।

Reservation ruse

Women's empowerment is an excuse to undermine federal equity

In a Parliament sitting convened from April 16, the Union government is seeking to advance women's empowerment, but as part of a wider legislative package: the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, and a companion Delimitation Bill. The stated rationale is the operationalisation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (the 106th Amendment of 2023), which reserves one-third of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats for women but was tied to a post-Census delimitation. The government's insistence on bundling women's reservation with delimitation suggests that the former is being used as political cover for the latter: a sweeping reallocation of Lok Sabha seats that would reshape the federal composition of Parliament to the advantage of States where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) enjoys electoral dominance, and at the expense of States where it has been historically weak.

When India's decennial Census was delayed for more than five years without a definitive or rational explanation from the BJP-led Union government, the political logic was not hard to discern. The 2021 Census was first postponed citing COVID-19, but no reason was offered for the successive deferrals that followed, until it was quietly announced that the exercise would be carried out in 2026-27. Under the Constitution, the freeze on inter-State distribution of Lok Sabha seats, pegged to the 1971 Census, was set to expire only after the first Census conducted after the year 2026 was published. This meant that in the normal course, delimitation would have been based on the 2031 Census. By delaying the Census to 2026-27, the government ensured that the delimitation exercise could be initiated on its preferred timeline, using the 2026-27 Census rather than one conducted in 2031.

Now, perhaps realising that any delimitation exercise would itself take years to conclude after the 2026-27 Census, and therefore not be ready even for the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, the government appears to be in a tearing hurry to proceed with delimitation on the basis of the last completed Census, that of 2011. The 131st Amendment Bill amends Articles 55, 81, 82, 170, 330, 332, and 334A of the Constitution. Its most consequential changes are the following. First, it raises the ceiling on Lok Sabha membership from 530 elected members from States and 20 from Union Territories to 815 and 35 respectively, to a potential House of 850. Second, it replaces the existing constitutional definition of "population", which specifies the 1971 Census for seat allocation and the 2001 Census for boundary demarcation, with an open-ended formulation: population shall mean the Census "as Parliament may by law determine." The choice of which Census to use is no longer left to the Constitution but will depend on ordinary legislation, changeable by simple majority. Third, it deletes the third proviso to Articles 82 and 170 entirely. A freeze on seat allocation that has been in place since the 42nd Amendment of 1976, and extended by the 84th Amendment of 2001, guaranteed States that had stabilised their populations that they would not lose parliamentary seats as a consequence. This safeguard is now removed.

Members of the Union Cabinet, including

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Members of the Union Cabinet, including Home Minister Amit Shah and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, had assured the country that the existing proportion of seats held by each State will be maintained through a uniform increase. But this assurance finds no place in the constitutional amendment. Article 81(2)(a), retained unchanged, mandates that the ratio between seats and population shall be the same for all States "so far as practicable" which is a population-proportionality requirement and does not preserve existing proportions.

Based on 2011 Census data, a purely population-proportional allocation to an 850-seat House would produce sharply unequal increases across regions. The Hindi-heartland States (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Delhi), which currently hold 207 of 543 seats, would secure 366 – a 77% increase, with their share rising from 38.1% to 43.1%. The southern States (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Puducherry), with 132 seats now, would receive only 176, a 33% increase, while their share would drop from 24.3% to 20.7%. The eastern States would slip from 14.4% to 13.7%; the North-East from 4.4% to 3.8%. The west and the northern non-Hindi States would remain roughly unchanged. States that spent decades building their health infrastructure, educational access, and women's agency that brought fertility down now face a reduction in their share of democratic power, while States that lagged on these indicators stand to gain the most seats. The already weakened fiscal federalism would now be compounded by diminished political representation for socio-economically advanced States.

That this legislation is being rushed through, with barely any time for public debate, just days before voters in two crucial States go to the polls, makes the timing even more suspect. There is no reason why women's reservation cannot be implemented within the existing 543-seat Lok Sabha by designating constituencies for women on a rotational basis, an approach the Opposition had pressed for after the passage of the 106th Amendment. MPs from States that stand to lose proportional representation in the Lok Sabha must resist the bulldozing of legislation on an issue that strikes at the federal foundations of the Indian Union. The consequences of letting this amendment pass are too grave to contemplate.

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- **The stated rationale is the operationalisation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (the 106th Amendment of 2023), which reserves one-third of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats for women but was tied to a post-Census delimitation.**
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Mapping the legislative vacuum in India's heat crisis

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The phenomenon of extreme heat in India has undergone a profound geographic and demographic shift, transitioning from a seasonal hardship to a systemic national crisis. Once confined largely to the arid northwest and central plains, heatwaves now regularly penetrate humid coastal corridors and traditionally temperate regions. The last two years recorded unprecedented temperatures, with over 57% of Indian districts now classified as heat-prone. However, while the thermal canopy covers the entire subcontinent, its impact is sharply divided by class, caste, and gender. For the affluent, heat is an inconvenience managed through private cooling; for the nearly 400-490 million informal workers, it is a systemic violation of the right to life and a driver of "thermal injustice."

Unlike those with private infrastructure, construction workers, street vendors, and delivery partners possess zero "cooling autonomy." For these individuals, as studies consistently demonstrate, even a small rise in temperature causes a significant drop in productivity and a corresponding loss of income. These workers are routinely forced to choose between their biological survival and their economic survival.

Evidence from the frontlines

Recent evidence from the frontlines has yielded harrowing testimonies of harm that underscore this inequality. Sanitation workers and waste pickers report that extreme ambient heat, combined with toxic fumes from unsegregated waste, creates hazardous micro-climates where temperatures can be up to 5% higher than in surrounding areas. Some workers have reported suffering severe physical burns on their hands and legs due to handling heated waste materials without protective gear. This 'climate-caste nexus' ensures that those in the most dehumanising roles are also the most exposed to lethal heat, yet



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The government should launch suitable provisions for financial compensation to cover the loss of income incurred when heat extremes prevent work

they remain largely excluded from existing adaptation strategies.

These vulnerabilities are seen across sectors. Gig delivery partners operate under "algorithmic pressure" where time-sensitive penalties discourage rest even during red-alert periods. Construction workers face high metabolic heat generated by physical exertion, compounded by the heat from steel and concrete. Street vendors face the double blow of health deterioration and a drop in daily income as goods perish and customers retreat.

A profound legal and fiscal vacuum exacerbates this crisis. The Factories Act, 1948 protects only those in indoor "workrooms," while the new Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code 2020 essentially erases outdoor heat. Although Section 23 of the Code allows the government to notify standards for weather, it does not mandate them, vesting the Centre with discretionary authority and no minimum safety floor.

And fiscally, since heatwaves are not currently on the Nationally Notified Disaster list, States are restricted by the '10% trap', where they can only utilise a small fraction of their State Disaster Response Fund for relief efforts.

However, from a worker's perspective, the issue remains one of occupational safety rather than just disaster management.

Addressing 'thermal injustice'

A comprehensive framework for legislative and executive action is required to bridge these gaps and transition from discretionary advisories to enforceable rights. This must begin with the formal acceptance of the 16th Finance Commission's recommendation to include heatwaves and lightning in the Notified National Disaster list for the 2026-31 period. Such a move would unlock the National Disaster Response Fund, bypass current spending restrictions, and

convert early warnings from simple advisories into binding mandates for district administrations. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Labour and the India Meteorological Department must transition to the Heat Index, a metric combining temperature and relative humidity to reflect true human feel, as the primary legal trigger for declaring heatwaves. This is essential to ensure that coastal areas, which face the lethal combination of heat and humidity, are not at a disadvantage in national safety protocols.

Furthermore, the government must exercise its powers under Section 23 of the OSHWC Code to notify binding heat safety rules, including protected work-rest cycles, and the provision of specialised Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as insulated flasks, as a non-negotiable employer obligation. Based on the Supreme Court's *Ranjitsinh* (2024) ruling, the 'Right to Cool' must be recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21, necessitating that Urban Local Bodies establish suitable cooling shelters and free public water kiosks.

Specialised binding directives are needed for high-hazard occupations, such as sanitation and underground mining, to mitigate risks from toxic exposure. For the gig economy, digital platforms should be legally prohibited from imposing delivery time penalties during heat alerts, ensuring a statutory thermal safety net for workers currently excluded due to their 'contractor' status. Finally, the government should launch suitable provisions for financial compensation to cover the loss of income incurred when heat extremes prevent work. Innovative models, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association parametric heat insurance scheme, provide a viable blueprint for this transition. Heat governance must be reimagined as a core component of the social contract where thermal safety is a non-negotiable mandate of constitutional justice.

- **The phenomenon of extreme heat in India has undergone a profound geographic and demographic shift, transitioning from a seasonal hardship to a systemic national crisis.**
- **Once confined largely to the arid northwest and central plains, heatwaves now regularly penetrate humid coastal corridors and traditionally temperate regions.**
- **The last two years recorded unprecedented temperatures, with over 57% of Indian districts now classified as heat-prone.**
- **However, while the thermal canopy covers the entire subcontinent, its impact is sharply divided by class, caste, and gender. For the affluent, heat is an inconvenience managed through private cooling; for the nearly 400-490 million informal workers, it is a systemic violation of the right to life and a driver of “thermal injustice.”**

- **Unlike those with private infrastructure, construction workers, street vendors, and delivery partners possess zero “cooling autonomy.”**
- **For these individuals, as studies consistently demonstrate, even a small rise in temperature causes a significant drop in productivity and a corresponding loss of income. These workers are routinely forced to choose between their biological survival and their economic survival.**
- **Recent evidence from the frontlines has yielded harrowing testimonies of harm that underscore this inequality.**
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- **And fiscally, since heatwaves are not currently on the Nationally Notified Disaster list, States are restricted by the ‘10% trap’, where they can only utilise a small fraction of their State Disaster Response Fund for relief efforts.**
- **However, from a worker’s perspective, the issue remains one of occupational safety rather than just disaster management.**
- **Based on the Supreme Court’s Ranjitsinh (2024) ruling, the ‘Right to Cool’ must be recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21, necessitating that Urban Local Bodies establish suitable cooling shelters and free public water kiosks.**

Food worth ₹1.55 lakh cr. wasted annually

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Each year, on March 30, the world marks the International Day of Zero Waste. This year, the theme is food waste, which is not only timely but also an emergency call for global attention to one of the most painful contradictions of our time: mountains of food going waste even as millions go to bed hungry and malnutrition prevails across the globe.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2024 finds that the world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food – inadequate post-harvest storage capacities and households accounting for 60% of it, food services 28%, and retail 12%. Beyond individual behaviour, the scale of food loss reflects systemic inefficiencies embedded in supply chains, policy failures, and consumption cultures that have normalised discarding food as an acceptable cost of abundance.

Yet, abundance is far from universal; around 783 million people still face hunger, and more than 3.1 billion are unable to afford a healthy diet. The coexistence of a billion tonnes of wasted food and a billion hungry stomachs is not an irony; it is an indictment of inefficiency and apathy.

India's position in the global picture is both consequential and deeply uncomfortable. According to the UNEP report, India ranks second globally in food waste, with 78-80 million tonnes of post-harvest crop and food worth ₹1.55 lakh crore wasted annually, following China, which wastes an estimated 108 million tonnes of food per year. At the same time, the U.S. wastes 24.7 million tonnes annually. Japan, which is long celebrated for its culture of 'mottainai' – a deep-rooted ethic of zero waste, wastes merely 5.2 million tonnes of food annually.

The per capita picture is equally revealing. Per capita household food waste in India stands at 55 kg annually, lower than 73 kg in the U.S. and 75 kg in Germany. The country ranks 11th



A.S. Mittal

Vice-Chairman,
Punjab Economic
Policy and Planning
Board

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out of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index and around 194 million of its people do not get enough food. Food waste is not a statistic; it is stolen meals from millions of mouths.

Punjab is a State that produces enough to feed hundreds of millions but then watches a significant portion of that go to waste before it reaches plates. Food loss and waste in the State is a significant issue, driven by extreme weather events and alarming levels of inefficiencies in storage and logistics. With over 8,200 tonnes of foodgrains getting spoiled in Food Corporation of India storage facilities alone in the State between 2019 and 2024, it is the highest in India.

According to a NITI Aayog report, post-harvest handling inefficiencies – inadequate covered storage facilities, under-investment in cold-chain infrastructure and timely mechanisation support, and the lack of grading, standardisation, and scientific packaging – are major bottlenecks in Punjab.

Food waste is not merely a human tragedy; it is an ecological one. Food loss and waste account for 8-10% of global annual greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the U.S. Decomposing food in landfills releases methane, which has a warming potential many times more than that of CO₂.

Every morsel wasted means lost water, land, fuel, and hard work of farmers. Producing one kilogram of rice requires about 5,000 litres of water. When that rice is thrown away, the water is lost too, more so for a State like Punjab which faces groundwater depletion. In this context, integrating food loss and waste into national climate plans is urgent.

Ending food waste demands a reconfiguration of systems, incentives, and values, with human dignity at their centre. The following are five credible and sustainable ways in that direction:

Build the cold chain, break the loss chain: India processes only around 8% of its produce compared to 65% of the U.S. and 23% of China. A national cold-chain mission, particularly in States such as Punjab, Haryana, and U.P., must be treated as food security infrastructure, not an optional investment.

Legislate against waste, legislate for sharing: Several European nations have made it illegal for supermarkets to destroy unsold edible food, mandating its donation to food banks instead. India needs a law to redistribute surplus food, backed by tax incentives for businesses and institutions that donate.

Empower the farmer at the first mile: Post-harvest loss begins at the farm gate. Farmer-producer organisations must be equipped with mechanised drying, hermetic storage bags, and mobile cold units. The Jute Packaging Materials Act, which requires grain storage in porous jute sacks, needs to be urgently reviewed to allow modern hermetic solutions.

Make waste visible, make saving rewarding: India currently has no consolidated national database tracking food waste at the retail and hospitality level. Mandatory food waste measurement and public reporting, modelled on the UNEP's Food Waste Index methodology, should be introduced for large food businesses, wedding caterers, and institutional kitchens.

Revive the ethic of treating 'Anna (food)' as sacred: Every culture on this subcontinent has, in its own way, treated food as something to be revered – *Anna Brahma*, food is god. It is the most sustainable food philosophy ever devised. Schools, communities, and public institutions must rekindle this ethic, not as religious instruction but as civic responsibility.

Let's move from awareness to collective action and make food waste reduction a shared national priority.

- **Each year, on March 30, the world marks the International Day of Zero Waste. This year, the theme is food waste, which is not only timely but also an emergency call for global attention to one of the most painful contradictions of our time: mountains of food going waste even as millions go to bed hungry and malnutrition prevails across the globe.**
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- **Beyond individual behaviour, the scale of food loss reflects systemic inefficiencies embedded in supply chains, policy failures, and consumption cultures that have normalised discarding food as an acceptable cost of abundance.**
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Global Hunger Index (GHI)

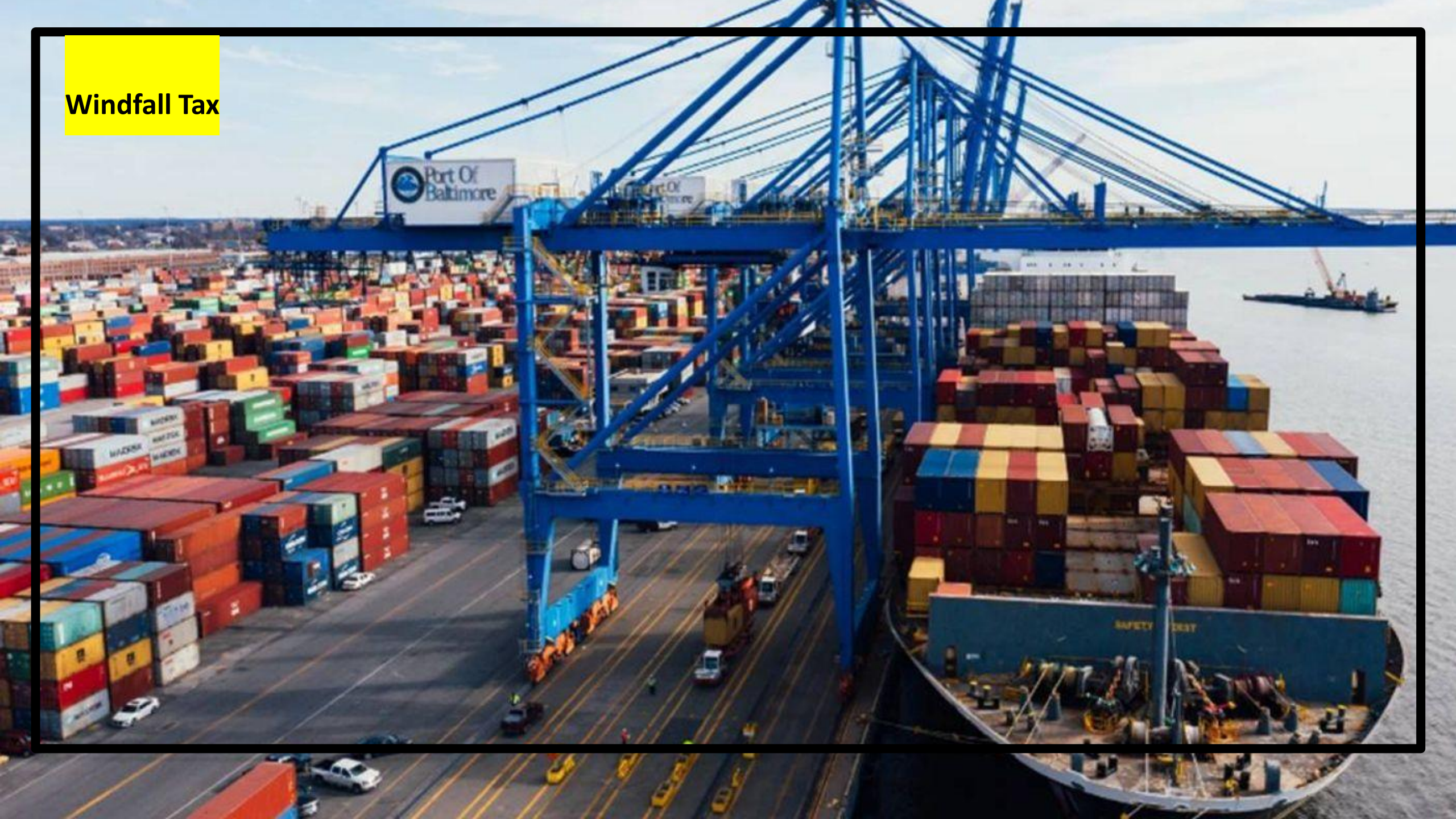
- **Index has been released by Irish humanitarian organization 'Concern Worldwide' and German aid agency 'Welthungerhilfe' (with FAO, UNICEF, WHO, IFPRI).**
- **Purpose of Index is to track hunger globally using nutrition & mortality indicators.**
- **Each country's GHI score is calculated based on a formula (See image) that combines four indicators:**
- **Undernourishment (Insufficient caloric intake);**
- **Child stunting (Children with low height under age 5);**
- **Child wasting: (Children with low weight for their height under age 5);**
- **Child mortality: (Children who die before their fifth birthday).**
- **India is ranked 102nd among the 123 countries assessed with a GHI score of 25.8, which is classified as serious.**
- **Child Nutrition Crisis: 1 in 3 Indian children is stunted. Undernourishment affects 172 million people, 13.5 million more than in 2016.**

Exercise Dustlik



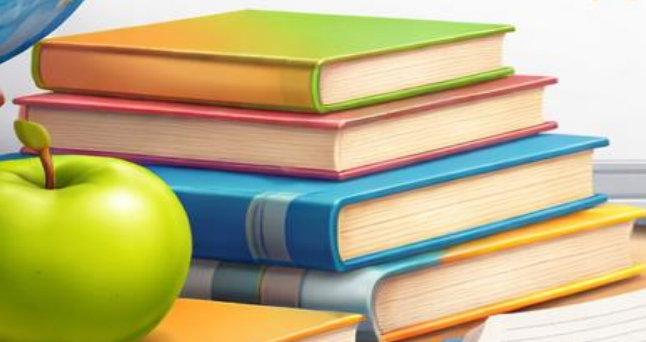
- **The Indian Army contingent has departed for Uzbekistan to participate in the 7th edition of Joint Military Exercise DUSTLIK, scheduled to be held at the Gurumsaray Field Training Area.**
- **Exercise DUSTLIK is a premier annual bilateral military training exercise conducted between the Indian Armed Forces and the Uzbekistan Armed Forces. It serves as a platform for sharing operational experiences and refining combat tactics in diverse environments.**
- **Host: Uzbekistan, specifically the Gurumsaray Field Training Area in Namangan.**
- **Nations: India and Uzbekistan.**
- **Cycle: The exercise is held annually, alternating between India and Uzbekistan. The 2025 edition was held in Pune, India.**

Windfall Tax



- **Oil marketing company stocks such as IOC, BPCL, HPCL and Reliance came under pressure after the Centre sharply increased the windfall tax on diesel and ATF exports amid crude prices crossing \$100 per barrel due to West Asia tensions.**
- **A windfall tax is a higher tax rate levied by the government on specific industries or companies when they experience unexpected, outsized profits—often referred to as windfall gains—due to favorable external conditions rather than their own business maneuvers or investments.**
- **In the energy sector, these gains typically occur when global geopolitical tensions drive up crude oil and fuel prices.**
- **To ensure that extraordinary profits resulting from global crises are shared with the public exchequer.**
- **To help the government fund subsidies or social programs that mitigate the impact of high fuel prices on consumers.**

Thank You!



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