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## GS Paper I – Geography

Date: 14.04.26

# IMD's April forecast projects monsoon to be 'below normal' for first time in 11 years

**Jacob Koshy**

NEW DELHI

India is staring at a "below-normal" southwest monsoon, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned for the first time in 11 years in its April forecast. Between the monsoon months of June-September, India is likely to receive only 92% of the long period average (LPA) of 87 cm rainfall this year, M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said at a press

CM

briefing on Monday.

India last experienced reduced monsoon rainfall in 2023, when the IMD had warned of "near-normal" rainfall at 96% of the LPA. In 2015, the IMD's warning of "below-normal" rain – at 93% of the LPA – turned out to be an underestimate with the actual rainfall recorded at 86%, making it one of India's worst drought years.

M. Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said the main reason for this year's below-normal monsoon



The insufficient rain could impact farming that is significantly rainfed. FILE PHOTO

warning was the likely development of an El Nino – the periodic warming of the Central Equatorial Pacific. At present, "weak" La Nina-like conditions – the

converse of an El Nino – were transitioning to neutral conditions. The effects of the El Nino were only likely to come into full effect in the second half of the monsoon.

With disruptions of fertilizer supply ahead of the kharif season anticipated in the wake of the West Asia war, insufficient rain could impact farming in the country, which is significantly rainfed.

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## GS Paper I – History

**Man of many tales:** A photograph of Subhas Chandra Bose (middle with garland) after addressing a public meeting at Beadgi in Dharwar district in 1939. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

# Subhas Chandra Bose: the paradox of a revolutionary's theory and praxis

The leader synthesised Indian spirituality with Hegelian dialectics, evolving from an absolute idealist into a pragmatic revolutionary seeking to build a modern, socialist India – an analysis on Bose's journey through philosophy, politics, and his plans for society and national regeneration

Prathmesh Kher



In August 18, 1945, a plane carrying Subhas Chandra Bose crashed over Taihoku in Taiwan. With that perished a systematic attempt to forge a "higher synthesis" between the spiritual wisdom of the East and the material dynamism of the West. Bose was neither a dreamer content with abstract philosophy nor a crude pragmatist indifferent to moral questions. As he put it himself, he refused to accept what he "could not live up to—what is not workable".

This piece examines his intellectual journey from absolute idealism to a dialectic conception of reality and its influence on his political doctrine and his revolutionary praxis.

### I. Philosophical foundation

Bose's early years were dominated by Vedanta as interpreted by Shankaracharya. He eventually found its core – the Doctrine of Maya, the world as illusion – incompatible with the needs of a revolutionary. In his autobiography *An Indian Pilgrim* (1937), he reflects: "There was a time when I believed that Absolute Truth was within the reach of human mind and that the Doctrine of Maya represented the quintessence of knowledge. Today I would hesitate to subscribe to that position. I have ceased to be an absolutist and am much more of a pragmatist"

Discarding Maya did not push Bose toward materialism. He came instead to view the world as real and evolving: "The world is a manifestation of Spirit and just as Spirit is eternal so also is the world of creation... It reflects the eternal play of eternal forces—the Divine Play, if you

will." The essential nature of this reality, for Bose, was moral: "For me, the essential nature of reality is LOVE."

While Bose's "Spirit" was Indian in origin, he found the law of its unfolding in Hegelian Dialectics: "Hegel would dogmatise that the nature of the evolutionary process, whether in the thought world or in reality outside, is dialectic. We progress through conflicts and their solutions. Every thesis provokes an antithesis. This conflict is solved by a synthesis... undoubtedly Hegel's theory is the nearest approximation to truth."

By synthesising Hindu philosophy with Hegelian dialectics, Bose concluded that since reality is Spirit gradually unfolding through conflict, the moral duty of the individual is to participate in that conflict – a belief that directly informed his doctrine of Samyavada.

### II. Doctrine of harmonious equality

Rooted in the Sanskrit *Sāmya* (equality, concord, harmony) and *vāda* (doctrine), Samyavada was not an imported ideology but a product of India's own philosophical evolution – a "Doctrine of Harmony" designed to resolve the contradictions of the modern age.

Bose did not view Fascism or Communism as finalities but as stages in the dialectical process. In *The Indian Struggle* (1934), he argued that India's role was to resolve their conflict: "The conflict between Fascism on the one side and Communism on the other... I see no reason why we cannot work out a synthesis of the two systems that will embody the good points of both"

He was equally critical of those who sought to blindly transplant foreign ideologies onto Indian soil. In *Forward Bloc – Its Justification* (1941): "The

Forward Bloc is a revolutionary and dynamic organisation. As such it does not swear by copy-book maxims or by text-books of Politics or Economics. It is anxious to assimilate all the knowledge that the outside world can give... It regards progress or evolution as an eternal process to which India also has a contribution to make."

Bose framed Samyavada as India's specific gift to the world's political lineage. In *The Anti-Imperialist Struggle and Samyavada* (1933), he traced a line of national contributions, from England's constitutionalism, the French notions of liberty and fraternity, to Germany's Marxism and the proletarian revolution of Russia, and declared: "The next remarkable contribution to the culture and civilisation of the world, India will be called upon to make."

In practice, Samyavada was a blueprint for a "thoroughly modern and Socialist State". His 1941 Kabul thesis listed its goals: complete national independence, scientific large-scale production, social ownership and control of production and distribution, and "application of the principles of equality and social justice in building up the New Order in Free India."

### III. Scientific Blueprint

For Bose, political freedom was merely the threshold. The real task was the total social and economic regeneration of the country. Addressing the Punjab Students' Conference in 1929, he defined independence in sweeping terms: "For me, it signifies independence for all – for the society, as well as the individual, for man as well as woman, for the rich as well as the poor; and implies not merely political freedom, but an equal distribution of wealth, removal of caste

differences and social injustice, and abolition of all communal narrownesses and bigotry."

As he moved into Congress leadership, he shifted from defining freedom to planning its mechanical implementation. A staunch advocate of industrialisation, he set himself apart from the Gandhian focus on agrarian self-sufficiency.

In his 1938 Haripura Presidential Address: "The first step in national reconstruction will be the eradication of poverty... This will require the scientific reorganisation of our agricultural and industrial life... I am a firm believer in the social ownership and control of both production and distribution."

Bose also became convinced that a fractured, impoverished India could not afford slow-moving, decentralised democracy during reconstruction. In *The Indian Struggle* (1934), he wrote: "It will be a Government of a strong Adarsha Sangh... which will have a strong Central Government with full powers for the period of reconstruction... a Federal Government for India but a strong Central Government with a certain amount of authoritarianism for a period of time."

It must be noted that Bose was living in an era when authoritarianism had caught the imagination of many nations, from Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, Soviet Russia, Kemalist Turkey, all of whom had undergone massive economic and cultural changes under centralised rule. Political theories, however, must be evaluated in the light of their times. Modern rights-based societies should rightfully question the prudence of and resist an appeal to authoritarianism as a shortcut solution to structural problems. (First in a two-part series)



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## GS Paper II – Polity

# SC raps EC on SIR ‘discrepancies’, says voting is a sentimental right

The poll body departed from its promise to leave voters on 2002 rolls untouched during the SIR; the category of ‘logical discrepancy’ was unique to West Bengal, top court says; it notes that the act of voting is the biggest expression of nationality

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court on Monday told the Election Commission (EC) that the right to be on the electoral roll and to vote in one’s own country was not only constitutional but also sentimental.

The top court was referring to lakhs of voters excluded for “logical discrepancies” lining up for appeal hearings in West Bengal, hardly 10 days ahead of the Assembly election, following an “inquisitorial” special intensive revision (SIR).

The court said 34 lakh appeals by voters purged from the West Bengal electoral roll had been filed for hearing before 19 appellate tribunals and there were over a lakh appeals pending before each of these tribunals.

The poll body had locked in the electoral roll for the State on April 9, days ahead of the polling on April 23 and 29.

After months of interventions to make the SIR more inclusive, the top court made cutting remarks about the impact of an exercise the poll body said was necessary to “purify the electoral roll”.

### Ballot proof

While the EC had frozen the West Bengal electoral rolls on April 9, the top court noted that 34 lakh appeals have been filed before 19 tribunals across the State



**Ruling awaited:** People gather to appeal before a tribunal over issues related to the SIR in Murshidabad, West Bengal, on Monday. PTI

“The right to remain on the electoral roll, the right to vote in the country you are born in is something which is not only constitutional but sentimental. It is the biggest expression of nationality and patriotism that you are in a participatory process to elect a democratic government,” Justice Joymalya Bagchi, part of the Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, said while addressing the poll body.

Senior advocate Dama Seshadri Naidu, for the poll body, said “statistics” proved West Bengal did not “stand out” and was “on par” with other States

in the number of exclusions.

#### ‘Question of fairness’

“We are not bothered about West Bengal ‘standing out’. But no other State has a category called ‘logical discrepancy’. We have examined Bihar, we did not find a single person flagged for logical discrepancy... This is not a question of inflating or shrinking the EC, but of fairness,” Justice Bagchi said.

The judge noted that the Supreme Court had permitted the poll body to embark on an inquisitorial exercise mindful of the latter’s concern about the

electoral rolls.

“The original SIR notification said voters in the 2002 electoral roll would not be touched. The 2002 roll would be the benchmark. But when you introduced ‘logical discrepancy’, you infringed that rule,” Justice Bagchi told the EC.

Mr. Naidu said voters who could prove their credentials were retained. Those with disparity in their names or other background details were asked to provide details, which were verified.

“A voter in the 2002 roll was not required to give anything... When the Bihar

It is the biggest expression of nationality and patriotism that you are in a participatory process to elect a democratic government

**JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI**  
Supreme Court judge



SIR was argued, and the Bihar SIR was a facsimile of the SIR we are dealing with today, the EC was unequivocal when it submitted that a person in the 2002 voter list does not have to prove anything. No uploading of documents was required... And then you deviated from your original arguments,” Justice Bagchi said.

#### Uncertain atmosphere

So far, the Supreme Court had avoided any direct criticism of the SIR.

The flurry of oral observations from Justice Bagchi indicated a judicial calling-out of the atmosphere of uncertainty and crisis which gripped the population during a hasty SIR process, especially in poll-bound West Bengal.

Justice Bagchi referred to how the exclusion of voters in the name of logical discrepancy came “so close” to the date of election in West Bengal that the top court had to step in and deploy judicial officers to hear out the objections. This was all the more reason why the appeal process must not be hurried, the judge said.

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## GS Paper II – International Relations

# The fallout of the crisis in West Asia on India's economy

**W**hile the Russia-Ukraine war shows no sign of abatement, another major crisis in West Asia has hit the global economy. This war has disrupted production, storage, and transport of various energy products including crude oil, natural gas and fertilizers, and has led to supply disruptions and increase in sectoral prices. There is a serious, although partial, blockade of the Strait of Hormuz thereby restricting the passage of crude oil, gas and other petroleum products as well as other goods. Even if matters get resolved in the near future, it may take considerable time for the normalisation of the supply chain. However, even the temporary ceasefire that has been agreed to has brought down the Brent crude oil price from \$109.3 per barrel as on April 7 and 8, to about \$95.

India has been diversifying its sources of imported crude oil, gas and fertilizers. At present, India is importing crude oil from 41 source countries. In fact, India's dependence on imported crude has been increasing in recent years and it is presently close to 90%.

The relevant crude price index for India is the Indian crude basket comprising Sweet grade (Brent) and Sour grade (Oman and Dubai average), which remains linked to the global crude oil price (average of Brent, WTI and Dubai). Considering the average of March 2026, the Indian crude basket was about 19% higher than the global crude price. The rise in the price of the Indian crude basket in March 2026 was over 64.5% that of February 2026 on average, even though the price increase for end-users were moderated.

With the temporary ceasefire, the Indian basket has come down to \$120.28 per barrel on April 9, 2026 from the peak of \$157 per barrel on March 23, 2026 – that is by a margin of \$37/bbl.

### Multiple stressors

The impact on the Indian economy will come through several channels. First is supply disruptions. Supply bottlenecks will affect production processes primarily in energy intensive sectors. However, any disruptions in these sectors would cascade into other sections of the economy, with the affected industries likely being textiles, paints, chemicals, fertilizers, cement and tyres among others. The non-availability of fertilizers and other chemicals particularly would affect the agricultural output in the Kharif season which will start from June.

Secondly, logistics. Storage and transport are



**C. Rangarajan**

Former Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council and Former Governor, Reserve Bank of India



**D. K. Srivastava**

Former Director, Madras School of Economics

The non-availability of fertilizers and other chemicals would affect the agricultural output in the Kharif season which will start from June

highly energy intensive. Increased logistics costs will lead to the increase in the prices of all final products through cascading.

Third, Indian exports will take a hit from both demand and supply sides. The demand side will be affected not only due to disruptions in West Asia but also due to a slowdown in other countries, including the U.S. and Europe. The share of India's merchandise exports to West Asian countries was 16.4% of total merchandise exports in 2024-25. The depreciation of the rupee, that is already underway, may partially help Indian exporters.

Fourth, exchange rate and remittances will be affected. The Indian rupee has been depreciating in recent months. The rate of depreciation has accelerated after the start of the West Asian crisis. As global crude prices, and the prices of fertilizers and other energy products also increase, there would be an additional demand for the dollar and other hard currencies; the exchange rate will be under pressure. Moreover, India receives a considerable number of remittances from Indians employed in the Gulf countries. These remittances are bound to go down, adding further pressure on the exchange rate. However, any improvement in the overall environment may lift the rupee.

In fact, the sharp decline in the value of the rupee has been caused mainly by the substantial capital outflows triggered by uncertainty and fear. When the war ends, the value of the rupee will also rise. The net Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) outflows in March 2026 amounted to \$13.6 billion, which is huge.

Fifth, is the current account deficit. The fall in the volume of Indian exports is expected to be accompanied by an increase in the value of Indian imports leading to an increase in the current account deficit, if the war continues. Sixth is rising inflation. Cost push inflation would affect relative prices in sectors that are directly affected such as petroleum products, fertilizers etc. However, if liquidity also increases, there would be pressure on overall inflation. The country needs to avoid any large liquidity increases.

And finally is the fiscal deficit problem. The Government of India may have to provide additional subsidies to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) as it insists on keeping retail prices at present levels. While to some extent, the reduction in excise duty on petrol and diesel would reduce losses for the OMCs, it would be a direct revenue loss to the Indian government. If

real GDP growth goes down and profit margins fall for major producers, there will be an adverse impact on the government's tax revenues. State finances will also be affected due to lower economic activity. Their share in tax devolution would be adversely affected if the Central government's tax revenues go down. States may also face pressure to reduce sales tax/VAT on petroleum products. In fact, the government must rethink the reduction in excise duty on petroleum products. The present move is due to the ongoing State elections. After that, the retail prices should go up, if the war resumes. In that situation, the higher price may constrain demand which is desirable.

### Myriad policy responses

As per information shared by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) chairman on March 27, the fortnightly loss on account of lower excise duties on petrol and diesel will be ₹7,000 crore whereas there would be a gain of ₹1,500 crore per fortnight on account of export tax on Aviation Turbine Fuel. This implies a net loss of ₹5,500 crore per fortnight, translating into an annual loss in tax revenue of about ₹1,32,000 crore for the government, should the crisis continue for the full year.

In all likelihood, food, fertilizers and petroleum subsidies would be higher than their budget estimates for 2026-27. As already mentioned, retail prices must be allowed to go up so long as crude prices remain high.

Although it is difficult to estimate the quantitative impact of the current crisis, some impacts were given by the RBI in its October 2025 Monetary Policy Report. In their estimates, for every 10% increase in the price of the Indian crude basket from a baseline of \$70 per barrel, that is an increase of \$7 per barrel, real GDP growth may fall by around 15 basis points. Further, assuming full pass-through to domestic product prices, inflation would be higher by 30 basis points.

As on April 9, 2026, the price of the Indian crude basket at \$120.28 per barrel has exceeded the baseline by about \$50 per barrel. If this margin of increase becomes applicable for the whole year, real GDP growth may fall from baseline estimates by 1 percentage point and inflation may increase by more than 2 percentage points. While these effects would be lower if the crisis gets resolved quickly, much depends upon when true peace will dawn.

*Views expressed are personal.*



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## GS Paper II – Polity

### Onus on SC to protect faith in democracy

**T**he Ides of March and April being the "cruellest month" dominated the world stage recently. "Ides" (from Latin *idus*) marked the approximate midpoint of Roman months. On March 15, 44 BCE, a few Roman senators stabbed Julius Caesar, a scene immortalised by William Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*, where a soothsayer warns Caesar about his death "beware the Ides of March". In *The Waste Land*, T.S. Elliot called April "the cruellest month".

Throughout these past few weeks, we saw "broken images" caused by the violence unleashed in March continuing in early April. Thousands perished in an insane man-made disaster. Fortunately, the boxers are in the white corner of the ring for the time being.

A few thousand kilometres from Delhi, in West Asia, the world saw an audacious attempt by a 250-year-old democracy (the U.S.) to "restore democracy" in a civilization spanning nearly 40 centuries (Iran).

A few hundred kilometres east of Delhi, a different kind of battle of democracy raged, where people tried to save their right to vote, not from a distant aggressor but from an unprecedented aggression of the Election Commission of India.

The tragic irony is that this institution was created by the Constitution to protect the same right it conferred on every citizen. That is how Indian electoral democracy was conceived. The vision of the founding fathers was painstakingly and honestly turned into a collective dream since 1950 when India pledged itself to being a Republic launching one of the most audacious attempts at enfranchising an illiterate mass of humanity.

Many were apprehensive of the capability of the unlettered to use this right rationally, but few doubted the ability and intent of those responsible for protecting that right. And yet today, seeing the way in which millions find their voting right being "snatched"



**Ashok Lavasa**

Former Election Commissioner and Union Finance Secretary of India

ECI devised hurdles that many found impossible to cross and created a situation that risks making people apathetic towards the process

just as they prepared to cast their vote, raises uncomfortable questions regarding the guardian institutions.

In undertaking the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), the ECI claimed a noble intent – "purging" the billion strong Indian electoral roll. This 'ambition' led to the innovative methodology of the SIR. It singled out West Bengal to apply the freshly-sharpened scythe of "logical discrepancy", which identified six million voters for 'special treatment'. The 'last twist of the knife' was that this was with the consent of the Supreme Court (SC), the most venerable and dependable last resort of the aggrieved. The cruelty is that the SC seems to not mind that the 2.7 million 'deleted' electors remained in a state of 'suspended animation'. In effect, the sentence is "to be hanged by the neck". Whether it is "till death" will be decided by the appellate tribunals set up under its aegis.

Let us make no mistake. The outcome of the West Bengal elections cannot determine the fairness of this procedure adopted by the ECI. Even if the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the party that cries 'foul' most loudly, wins the elections, the 'abduction' of the voting right of those denied a chance to establish the genuineness of their contention cannot be overlooked. They were left stranded by a half-baked process, maimed by the weapon of "logical discrepancy", and undone by the apathy of the protector institutions they trusted. The apathy of one of them was evident in the 'ultimatum to TMC tweet', showing the yellow card before any foul was committed.

Last year, during the Bihar SIR hearing, the SC asserted that it would not allow mass deletions. Apparently, the scale of deletions in West Bengal has not dismayed the SC whereas even one elector deprived unfairly should be enough to upset the court. For the ECI, it would be a matter of shame if its famous clarion call of "no voter to be left behind" hereafter

sounds like a hollow slogan.

Instead of creating a conducive environment encouraging citizens to become electors, ECI actually devised hurdles that many found impossible to cross. Instead of pursuing its motto "every vote matters", ECI created a situation that risks making people apathetic towards the process. Hitherto, it focused all its energy on increasing poll percentage, which in General Elections have never exceeded 68%. Now, its success might owe to lowering the denominator due to the large-scale deletions.

Voting is not just a public service everyone should be able to access with equal ease. It is a right guaranteed by the Constitution; a democratic duty every citizen is obliged to perform. That is the primary responsibility of the ECI, which like Hamlet sees the ghost of an intruder in every Bengali-speaking Muslim and is attempting to do what the State was obliged to but could not.

It is this obsession to 'purge' the electoral roll that has brought the ECI dangerously close to the sin of democide. Every genuine citizen pushed into limbo is entitled to feel that for him electoral democracy is dead and that for him the festival became a funeral because his grave was dug by the institutions meant to take him to the promised land.

Courts can punish illegalities, not sins. A sin only has consequences. It could keep nibbling at your conscience, if you have one. It will sully your reputation, if you care for it. But the most dangerous is if people stop believing in fairness, if people lose hope in the guardians of their rights, if they reconcile to injustice being their collective destiny.

The Supreme Court still has a chance to prevent a sin of commission and redeem the constitutional right of those who had originally passed the test of ECI's due process, successfully navigated the eddies of the SIR, only to be caught in a procedural whirlpool as they seemed ashore.

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## GS Paper II – Social Issue

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# Rise in middle class vulnerability

India is lifting its people out of income-based poverty but not moving them ahead for better upward mobility and economic opportunity. A World Bank policy paper proposes shifting welfare analysis from merely counting those below the poverty line to measuring how far people are from a reasonable standard of living.

### ECONOMIC NOTES

**Deepanshu Mohan**  
**Ankur Singh**

**A**mid rising geopolitical uncertainty that risks deepening domestic inequality in emerging market economies, India's macroeconomic performance is still widely seen as a story of progress, with its recent growth model often held up as a success in reducing poverty, and by conventional measures, that claim does hold with its merits.

The share of Indians living below the World Bank's lower middle income poverty line has fallen sharply from over 50% a decade ago to roughly 30% in recent estimates. Welfare programs through improved last-mile distributive connectivity now reach hundreds of millions through subsidised food, direct transfers and financial inclusion. Hence, extreme deprivation may have declined amongst vulnerable groups.

Yet this narrative rests on a narrow question: Poverty lines tell us whether people have crossed a threshold of subsistence.

They do not tell us what lies above that threshold, or whether it offers a meaningful pathway forward.

**Well-being as a spectrum**  
That limitation has long been recognised. What is more recent is the attempt to move beyond it.

A World Bank policy paper proposes a different way of thinking about welfare, one that does not simply count how many people fall below a line but asks how far people are from a reasonable standard of living. Instead of a binary classification, it treats well-being as a spectrum and gives greater weight to those furthest behind.

This is not just a statistical refinement. It challenges how economic progress is interpreted and how policy success is assessed. It suggests that falling poverty may be masking a deeper failure, the inability of growth to translate into sustained economic movement across large sections of the population.

Seen through this lens, India's growth story appears less reassuring.

The country has been among the fastest growing major economies in the world. Yet concerns about inequality, wage stagnation and employment generation have intensified rather than receded. The issue is not that growth has faded. It is that growth has not translated into mobility.

Crossing a poverty line, in this context, does not necessarily mark entry into stability. It often marks entry into a zone of vulnerability, where incomes remain low, volatile and insufficient to support sustained improvement in living standards. What is expanding is not a secure middle class, but a vulnerable middle.

This pattern reflects deeper structural constraints. Growth in India has increasingly been driven by sectors that are either capital intensive or limited in their ability to absorb labour at scale. Output expands, but the transmission mechanism into stable employment remains weak.

That disconnect is visible in the labour market. Fewer than 10% of Indian workers hold formal jobs with social security protections. The rest operate in an informal economy where productivity growth is limited and earnings remain uncertain.

Government data from the e-Shram portal shows that 94.11% of registered



**Walk the line:** Surveys suggest that real wages for salaried workers have remained stagnant in recent years, even as overall productivity has improved. AP/WIDEWORLD

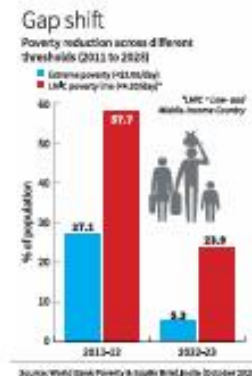
informal workers earn less than ₹30,000 a month. At such income levels, the ability to convert earnings into durable improvements in well-being remains constrained. Access to better education, healthcare and financial security depends not only on income, but on its stability and scale. Volatility itself becomes a barrier to mobility.

This is where the structure of growth begins to matter more than its pace. Even in sectors where output has expanded, employment has not kept up.

Data from labour and industry surveys suggest that real wages for salaried workers have remained largely stagnant in recent years, even as overall productivity has improved. The link between growth and income is not just weak, it is increasingly fractured.

This disconnect is not just a short-term fluctuation in demand but points to deeper structural fault lines in the economy. It is here that the limits of growth become clearer, as the movement of workers into more productive sectors has stalled rather than accelerated.

From here, the problem reveals itself as structural. Economic transformation depends on the continuous movement of workers into higher productivity activities.



In India, that movement has slowed and, in some respects, reversed.

Manufacturing has not expanded at the pace required to absorb the roughly twelve million people entering the labour force each year. Between 2016 and 2022, the sector shed roughly 24 million jobs even as the economy continued to grow. Many workers have instead moved back into agriculture, which still employs nearly 46% of the workforce while producing only about 8% of national output. The income implications are stark. The average farm household earns about ₹10,215 per month across all members, translating to roughly ₹75 per person per day. For a large share of the workforce, the distance from subsistence may have narrowed, but the distance from economic security remains substantial.

At the same time, gains at the top have accelerated. Recent estimates suggest that 271 millionaires now hold wealth equivalent to roughly one quarter of India's net national income. The top 1% alone captures more than 22% of national income.

These trends are not contradictory. They reflect the limits of how progress is measured. Indicators that track poverty reduction capture the elimination of extreme deprivation. They do not capture whether the economy is generating broad-based opportunity or concentrating gains across regions, sectors and income groups.

In that sense, the problem is not only economic. It is also statistical. When metrics focus on thresholds, they can obscure the conditions just above them, signalling success even as mobility stalls.

**Falling poverty, fragile households**  
The consequences are visible across the economy. Youth unemployment stands at around 45%, while the unemployment rate among graduates is close to 25%. For many households, education no longer reliably translates into upward movement.

Household balance sheets reflect similar pressures. Net household financial savings have fallen to roughly 5% of GDP, while household debt has risen sharply, much of it in unsecured borrowing. Increasingly, credit is being used not to

finance aspiration, but to smooth volatility and sustain basic consumption. In effect, subsistence itself is becoming financialised.

Even human development indicators point in the same direction. India's child wasting rate remains the highest in the world at 31.7%, and about 35.9% of children under five are stunted. These are not only indicators of deprivation. They are indicators of constrained future mobility.

**Shifting challenge**  
Taken together, these patterns suggest that the central economic challenge is shifting. It is no longer only about reducing poverty. It is about preventing those who move above it from being trapped just beyond it.

This is precisely where the new measurement approach becomes useful. By focusing on the distance from a reasonable standard of living rather than a fixed threshold, it captures whether growth is enabling people to move forward or simply preventing them from falling back.

For India, that distinction is becoming critical. An economy can reduce poverty rates while leaving large segments of its population clustered just above them. It can generate growth without generating mobility. What it produces, instead, is a vulnerable middle with limited pathways upward.

The policy challenge, therefore, is not only to sustain growth, but to restore the link between growth and mobility. That requires expanding productive employment, strengthening the connection between productivity and wages and ensuring that gains are not confined to a narrow segment of the economy.

India's development story is entering a more demanding phase. The question is no longer how many people can be lifted out of poverty. It is whether growth is quietly creating a class that can neither fall back nor move forward.

*Deepanshu Mohan, Professor and Dean, G.P. Jindal Global University, Director, Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES), Visiting Professor, LSE, and Visiting Research Fellow, University of Oxford; Ankur Singh, Research Assistant, CNES*

### THE GIST

India is among the fastest growing major economies in the world. Yet concerns about inequality, wage stagnation and employment generation have intensified rather than receded.

Fewer than 10% of workers hold formal jobs with social security protections. The rest operate in an informal economy where growth is limited and earnings remain uncertain. Data shows 94% of informal workers earn less than ₹10,000 per month.

Between 2016 and 2022, the manufacturing sector shed close to 24 million jobs even as the economy grew. At the same time, gains at the top have accelerated. Estimates suggest that 271 millionaires hold wealth equivalent to roughly one-quarter of the country's net national income.



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## GS Paper II – Polity

# State Census offices told to monitor online narratives

Officials and field staff should look into adverse comments about the ongoing exercise and counter false information, CCI tells State Directorates; first phase under way in 8 States and UTs

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India (RG&CCI) has directed the Census Directorates in the States to “monitor social media narratives round the clock” to flag propaganda and false narratives against the ongoing Census exercise.

The first phase of Census 2027 – the House Listing and Housing Operations (HLO) – kicked off on April 1 in eight States and Union Territories. Prior to that, the RG&CCI had launched a self-enumeration portal. The online enumeration will be followed by a door-to-door visit by the Census enumerators from April 15 where the details will be verified.

On March 19, RG&CCI Mritunjay Kumar Narayan wrote to the State Directorates saying that they may depute effective 24/7 teams for handling social media accounts along with “content creation capabilities”.

The letter added, “As the HLO operations begin,



Officials conducting pre-test exercise of population Census 2027 in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh. R.V. MOORTHY

it will be crucial to monitor social media narratives around the clock for any adverse comments/propaganda items/false narratives, so that they can be countered/fact-checked in real time through State/UT Directorate or field functionaries, with intimation to the ORGI (Office of the RG&CCI).”

Mr. Narayan added that for the successful enumeration in 2027, it is crucial that adequate publicity measures are undertaken to raise awareness among people of the Census.

The second phase of the Census, the Population Enumeration, which will also

enumerate caste, will conclude by February 28, 2027, in all States and Union Territories, except Ladakh and hill-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. In these places, the second phase will be completed by September 30, 2026.

### Confidential info

Mr. Narayan said the publicity campaign will not only inform people about the questions that will be asked in the two phases but also reassure them that all information will be kept confidential, fostering trust and confidence in the

process. “The use of a mix of media, including radio, television, newspapers, and social media, will be instrumental in sensitising the public and ensuring accurate data collection, as demonstrated in previous Censuses,” he added.

In 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs informed a parliamentary panel that the “right kind of messaging will be done to tackle the miscommunication and rumours around the National Population Register (NPR) and Census”.

The Census, a decennial exercise, was last held in 2011. The NPR was also first compiled that year.

The first phase of Census and the NPR were initially to be rolled out in some States on April 1, 2020, but were postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the protests related to the NPR and its link to the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, the government had decided not to update the NPR during the present Census.



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## GS Paper III – Science & Technology

# Why matter comes in 'flavours'

Addressing the flavour puzzle will not just tidy up loose ends in the theory of forces and particles, it would reveal something profound about how nature organises its complexity at a fundamental level; the solution can involve new forces of nature, extra spatial dimensions or extra universes

Nirmal Raj

At the smallest scales, nature often repeats itself. It makes families of subatomic particles that look identical in almost every way. Yet when scientists measured them, they found these 'copies' didn't line up neatly. Some are far heavier than others for no clear reason. Some change into one another at oddly chosen rates. While physicists can describe these patterns with impressive precision, they don't know why the pattern exists at all.

These effects occur at a deeper level in particle physics, going by the name 'flavour puzzle'. It consists of several questions. Consider the electron: it was discovered in 1897 and found not to be unique in 1936, when scientists found the muon. Oddly, the muon has the same properties as the electron but is 200 times heavier, prompting the physicist Isidor Rabi to ask: "Who ordered that?" The meaning of this question was that the theory of electrons told us how it behaves and interacts with other particles, but it didn't predict there would be another copy of it.

To make matters more confusing, scientists discovered the tauon in 1975, weighing 17 times the muon.

### Why in threes?

Over the years, scientists have found other elementary particles occurring in similar triplicates. Each copy, like the electron, muon or tauon, is called a generation. Neutrinos also come in three generations. Protons and neutrons are built from quarks called up and down, and each of these quarks comes in three generations (up, charm, top; down, strange, bottom).

The Standard Model, which is the reigning theory of particle physics, says precisely how all these particles communicate to make the universe. But it is silent on why they come in threes. Why not one or two, or 17?

Over decades, physicists have learnt that while this question is deceptively easy to pose, it is notoriously difficult to answer.

### Masses and mixing

The arrangement of masses has been inexplicable as well. The electron and the top quark respectively weigh about 1/1,800-times and 180-times the proton, with the masses of other charged particles taking values between these extremes in no clear scheme. The Koide formula relates the masses of the electron, muon, and tauon in a mathematical guess but lacks a solid fundamental explanation.

Neutrinos are another puzzle: the Standard Model says they should have no mass, yet they do – and even then each neutrino weighs at least a million times less than an electron.

Further yet, an effect called quantum mixing plus a fundamental force called the weak force allow particles of different generations to morph into one another. But even then, the rates at which quarks mix (meaning how much they



The Large Hadron Collider can zoom in on phenomena happening at a scale of  $10^{-16}$  m. But to fathom flavour, theoretical estimates suggest we need to plumb at least  $10^{16}$  m, which would require much more powerful particle accelerators. cern

masquerade as other particles) look nothing like those at which neutrinos mix.

The weak force is also involved in an effect called CP violation, which scientists believe is responsible for our universe containing almost no antimatter. However, the magnitude of CP violation the Standard Model makes room for is insufficient to explain the dominance of matter over antimatter observed in the cosmos. Another force called the strong nuclear force predicts a large degree of CP violation, but scientists have found no signs of it. This is called the strong CP problem.

### The flavour puzzle

Why are there three generations? Why do the masses span so vast a range? What is behind the peculiar patterns of the masses? What explains the different mixing? Where is the amount of CP violation required to explain the matter-antimatter asymmetry?

All of these mysteries together constitute the flavour puzzle. The name comes from the fact that physicists use the word 'flavour' as a label for different types of otherwise similar particles – a name the physicists Murray Gell-Mann and Harald Fritzsch coined at a Baskin-Robbins store. The electron, muon, and tauon are the same kind of particle (leptons) but come in three flavours. The same is true for the quarks. Each flavour has a different mass and can mix.

One way to think about it is to ask what would happen if flavour didn't exist and we had just one generation of matter particles. The fundamental forces will still

**The electron, muon, and tauon are the same kind of particle (leptons) but come in three flavours. The same is true for the quarks. Each flavour has a different mass and can mix**

operate and we will still have atoms, chemistry, and life. Only, physics would lack some of its richness, such as the phenomena induced by CP violation, rare processes, and the conversion of flavours between neutrinos. The thing is these processes are not essential for atoms, chemistry or life. It's as if nature has them for decoration, with no tangible purpose.

### Free parameters

The Standard Model is the most successful theory of science to date. It owes this compliment to the fact that it is internally self-consistent and that countless lab experiments have successfully tested its predictions.

The problem is that while the Standard Model says how particles behave, it doesn't predict the numerical values of many of the particles' properties. For example, it doesn't say that an electron at rest has an energy of 511 keV. Instead scientists have measured these values in experiments and then plugged them into the theory. These numbers are called free parameters.

The Standard Model has 19 free parameters – and 14 of them arise due to flavour, making it seem as if the Model is swaddled in its mysteries.

How do we crack the flavour puzzle? Scientists figured out that they could

explain atoms of the same element behaving differently in nuclear reactions by zooming in, revealing that some of the nuclei had more or fewer neutrons (these nuclei are called isotopes). The Large Hadron Collider in Europe can zoom in on phenomena happening at a scale of  $10^{-16}$  m. But to fathom flavour, theoretical estimates suggest we need to plumb at least  $10^{16}$  m, which would require much more powerful particle accelerators.

### New forces of nature

Ultimately, the solution to the flavour puzzle could involve new forces of nature, grand unified theories of fundamental forces, extra spatial dimensions or even extra universes. Or perhaps it could be that there is no puzzle at all. Scientists have yet to unearth a logic that explains flavours in the subatomic world – yet there is also no reason for them to not be what they are. We don't have enough information right now to know which way the sword really cuts. Perhaps flavours are an environmental accident, perhaps they vary in other universes, perhaps we're overthinking all of this.

That said, one thing is for sure: addressing the flavour puzzle wouldn't merely tidy up loose ends in an otherwise successful theory of forces and particles. It would reveal something profound about how nature organises its complexity at a fundamental level. The rhyme of flavours is not noise but a code. We've learnt how to read it but we haven't yet deciphered what it's trying to tell us.

(Nirmal Raj is an assistant professor of theoretical physics at the Centre for High Energy Physics at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. nraj@iisc.ac.in)