

JULY

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DownToEarth
FORTNIGHTLY ON POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

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State of the informal sector

Over the last 7 years, many units have shut, 16.45 lakh jobs have been lost in the non-farm informal economy, data from the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises show. What is the upshot of these numbers?

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

The informal sector – small and medium enterprises and household proprietary and partnership establishments – accounts for almost half of India's economic output and more than three-fourths of employment. But the sector faces challenges – over the last seven years, many units have shut and about 16.45 lakh jobs have been lost, data from the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (ASUE) shows.

Outcomes of the 2022-23 and 2022-23 surveys were released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on July 16. The data reflects the impact of three major economic shocks suffered by the economy – de-institutionalisation (November 2016), the rollout of GST (July 2017), and the Covid-19 pandemic (beginning March 2020).

Informal manufacturing establishments were the worst affected compared to the previous period. Most new jobs in the sector were created in own-account enterprises, which are unincorporated units, including a lot of small businesses.

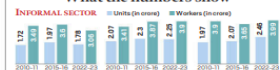
What are unincorporated enterprises? These are enterprises in the unorganised or informal sector, comprising Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), household units including those with hired workers, and own-account enterprises. The surveys were conducted for unincorporated non-agricultural establishments in three sectors – manufacturing, trade, and "other services".

Manufacturing establishments were covered under the Factories Act, 1948 and the organised manufacturing sector. A formal part of the informal sector, household units of industries (AGI), have been surveyed, along with informal establishments engaged in non-electric generating, and building and manufacturing bidi and cigar. Units for non-captive power generation, transmission, and distribution are also covered.

Electricity generating units are also covered. Unincorporated enterprises in the informal sector include trade and other services, proprietary and partnership establishments, and household units (including those with hired workers, and own-account enterprises), as well as sole proprietorships, self-help groups, and non-profit institutions are included.

Why are these survey results important? Before the 2022-23 and 2022-23 periods, the last available data were from 2015-16. 2022-23 survey results are important for instance because they provide a snapshot of the state of the informal sector, and also provide a useful baseline for generating jobs and absorbing especially recently unemployed and underemployed labour in a clearly growing for employment trends, especially when there is a substantial increase in the number of the nation's population in the workforce (from 10.5 billion in 2011 to 14.5 billion in 2022-23), and regulatory compliance and inclusion in the sector (2017), and

What the numbers show



Source: Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (ASUE), NSO, 2022-23

Notes: 1. The data for 2022-23 is preliminary and subject to finalisation. 2. The data for 2022-23 is preliminary and subject to finalisation.

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What is the trend across sectors?

Manufacturing units were the worst hit, contracting 8.3% between 2022-23 and 2015-16. In 2015-16, the number of units was 1.72 lakh and 1.87 lakh workers, respectively. In 2022-23, the number of units was 1.12 lakh and 1.23 lakh workers, respectively.

Units in the trade sector contracted to a lesser extent – to 2.26 lakh units, a 2% decline in 2022-23 from 2015-16. The number of workers increased marginally by 0.8% to 2.46 lakh in this period.

Service sector establishments, on the other hand, experienced a rise in the number of units and workers. By 2023, the number of units was 1.12 lakh and 1.23 lakh workers, respectively, and by 0.5% to almost 4 lakh respectively.

Earlier in the last seven years (2015-16 to 2022-23), however, show that the numbers of both enterprises and workers grew a slower pace during the five years from 2010-11 to 2015-16. The number of units in the sector increased by 11% and workers by 13% during the period.

The number of workers in the service sector declined by 4% from 2010-11 to 2015-16, but increased by 9.5% from 2015-16 to 2022-23. The number of units in the sector increased by 10.1% from 2015-16 to 2022-23, compared to 4.8% in the earlier period.

What do the data on output show?

In recent years, the Gross Value Added (GVA) per enterprise increased by 8% in 2022-23 from Rs 1.82 lakh in 2015-16, while the real GVA per worker rose by 1.4% to Rs 1.84 lakh.

By region, however, growth was much slower. The real GVA of unincorporated non-agricultural enterprises grew by 6.0% in 2022-23, which was still lower than the pre-pandemic level. India Ratings said in a note, "A long-term view of the real GVA of UOE gives a better picture of the economic impact of the decline in the sector. While the real GVA of UOE had grown at a CAGR compounded an annual rate of 7.4% between 2012-13 and 2015-16, its CAGR contracted by 0.2% between 2015-16 and 2022-23."

What has been the pattern of informal employment across states?

Out of the 14 states, Union Territories (J&K and Ladakh) have comparatively received the least attention in informal sector workers in 2022-23 compared with the data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the Census of India (2011-11). The share of informal sector workers in the total workforce in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, a situation of economic distress and a sharp drop from the formal sector.

Data on the top 10 informal sector units across three quarters of informal sector workers are provided in the table alongside.

Context: India's informal sector, comprising SMEs and household enterprises, contributes nearly half of the country's GDP and over 75% of jobs.

- The recent data from ASUSE reveals challenges, with many units closing and around 16.45 lakh jobs lost in the past seven years.

Unincorporated Enterprises

- About:** It belong to the unorganised or informal sector, encompassing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), household units with hired workers, and own-account enterprises.
- Sector Coverage:** Surveys are conducted for unincorporated non-agricultural establishments in three main sectors: manufacturing, trade, and "other services".
- Manufacturing Sector:** Includes manufacturing units not covered under the Factories Act, 1948, and those outside the organised sector's Annual Survey of Industries (ASI). This also encompasses informal establishments engaged in activities like cotton-ginning, cleaning, bailing, and manufacturing bidi and cigar.
- Electric Power Sector:** Covers units involved in non-captive electric power generation, transmission, and distribution that are not registered with the Central Electricity Authority (CEA).

Recent Data of NSSO

- The informal sector saw a **decline in employment despite an increase in the number of enterprises** between 2015-16 and 2022-23.
- Own-account enterprises** grew by nearly 4% over seven years, contrasting with a 3.2% decline in hired-worker enterprises.
- The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) shows a rise in agricultural workers and a **decline in manufacturing jobs**, particularly affecting women in agricultural roles.
- Despite expectations, there's **no clear movement of surplus labour from informal sectors (e.g., agriculture, construction) to formal sectors (e.g., manufacturing, high-productivity services)**.
- In 2022-23, **informal sector employment decreased** by 1.5%, with a simultaneous increase in unincorporated enterprises by 16.56 lakh units.

Informal Sector

- About:** Workers and enterprises operating outside government regulation constitute the informal sector.
- Social Security Benefits:** Employees in the informal sector do not receive entitlements to social security benefits unlike their formal sector counterparts.
- Job Security and Fixed Hours:** Workers in the informal sector face uncertainties regarding job security and work hours.

Centre asks States to ensure that queer community gets equal rights in prisons

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Centre has asked States/Union Territories to ensure that members of the queer community (LGBTQ+) get equal rights in prison and there is no discrimination in access to goods and services, especially prison visitation rights.

In a note to Home Secretaries and Heads of Prisons, the Ministry of Home Affairs said it had come to the notice of the Ministry

that members of the queer community (LGBTQ+) were often discriminated against because of their gender identity or sexual orientation and faced violence and disrespect.

Referring to the Model Prison Manual, 2016, the MHA said "every prisoner shall be allowed reasonable facilities for seeing or communicating with, his/her family members, relatives, friends and legal advisers for the preparation of an appeal or for procuring bail or for arranging the

management of his/her property and family affairs."

Also, the inmate should be allowed to have interviews with his/her family members, relatives, friends and legal advisers once in a fortnight.

The number of persons who may interview a prisoner at one time should ordinarily be limited to three. Interviews with female prisoners should, if practicable, take place in the female enclosure/ward. "It is reiterated that

these provisions equally apply to the members of queer community and they can meet a person of their choice without any discrimination or judgement."

The MHA asked the prison authorities to sensitise the concerned officials at all levels to ensure that all persons were treated equally in a fair and just manner and no person, especially those belonging to the queer community, were discriminated against in any manner whatsoever.

Context: The Union Government has written a letter to States and Union Territories and asked them to ensure that members of the queer community (LGBTQ+) get equal rights in prison.

Queer Community

- **About:** Queer" serves as an adjective encompassing sexual orientations beyond exclusively heterosexual or straight identities.
- **Identity:** It embraces individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, gender-fluid, or gender-nonconforming.
- **Reclamation and Controversy:** Historically derogatory, "queer" has been reclaimed by some LGBTQIA+ individuals as a self-descriptor, yet it remains contentious within the community.

Background of the LGBTQIA+ Community

- **Ancient Indian Cultural Perspective:** Acceptance and celebration of all types of love, as well as a neutral view of homosexuality, were central to ancient Indian culture.
- **Khajuraho Temple Depictions:** The Khajuraho Temple in Madhya Pradesh illustrates the presence of sexual fluidity and acceptance among homosexuals in ancient Indian art.
- **British Colonial Influence:** In 1861, British colonial authorities introduced laws in India that considered homosexual practices as "against the order of nature," influencing legal and social attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- **Shakuntala Devi's Contribution:** In 1977, Shakuntala Devi published "The World of Homosexuals," a pioneering work that advocated for full acceptance of homosexuality in Indian society.
- **Legal Recognition:** LGBTQIA+ individuals were recognized as a third gender by law in 1994, following a Supreme Court judgment that affirmed their voting rights and recognition under law.
- **Supreme Court Ruling (NALSA judgement):** In 2014, the Supreme Court of India ruled that transgender individuals should be recognized as a third gender, marking a significant step towards equality and recognition in Indian society.
- **Navtej Singh Johar case (2018):** The court recognised rights of gay couples to engage in same-sex relationships.
- **Supriyo Chakraborty V Union of India (2023):** SC recently delivered a verdict, rejecting petitions to legalize same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 → No fundamental right to marry under the Constitution → Queer couples do not have the right to adopt → Couples do not enjoy a right to a civil union.

Aatmanirbharta in defence: MoD notifies fifth Positive Indigenisation List of 346 items for DPSUs

Context: Recently, the Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence, has released the fifth Positive Indigenisation List (PIL) comprising 346 items, which mandates procurement exclusively from the Indian industry following specified timelines for indigenisation listed on the Srijan portal.

Srijan Portal

- **About:** The portal is to partner the private sector in indigenisation efforts of Defence Public Sector Undertakings(DPSUs), DPSU's and the Armed Forces.
- **Developed by:** Department of Defence Production to promote indigenization in defence manufacturing.
- **Nodal Agency:** Ministry of Defence.
- **Objective:** Provides information on items suitable for indigenization by the private sector.
- **Role of DPSUs/OFB/SHQs:** To display items for potential indigenization by Indian industry, fostering joint ventures with OEMs.
- **Industry Interaction:** Facilitates interaction between Indian industry and DPSUs/OFB/SHQs based on specific item requirements and procedural guidelines.
- **Features:**
 - Acts as a comprehensive internet platform providing details, images, specifications, and import values of defence products.
 - Includes a user-friendly search function for easy access to indigenization opportunities.
 - Initially focused on items with import values exceeding Rs 1 million, influencing import trends over subsequent fiscal years.

Positive Indigenisation List (PIL)

- **Objective:** Aims to stimulate domestic defence production and reduce dependency on imports.
- **Supported by:** Various policies to nurture a robust defence manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Includes complex systems, sensors, weapons, and ammunition prioritized for indigenous procurement.



Context: On this day, July 18, in 1980, India marked a milestone as it launched its first satellite, Rohini-1, into space.

Rohini

- **Launch Date:** Rohini Satellite RS-1 was launched on July 18, 1980, marking a significant milestone in India's space program.
- **First Indian-made Launch Vehicle:** RS-1 became the first satellite to be placed in orbit by an Indian-made launch vehicle, showcasing India's growing capabilities in space technology.
- **Satellite Specifications:** According to ISRO, RS-1 was an experimental spin-stabilized satellite with a weight of 35 kg and capable of generating 16 W of power.
- **Launch Details:** RS-1 was successfully launched aboard SLV-3 (Satellite Launch Vehicle-3) from the SHAR Centre. It was placed into an orbit with an inclination of 44.7° and an orbit of 305 x 919 kilometers, achieving its intended mission objectives.

Satellite Launch Vehicle-3 (SLV-3)

- **About:** It was India's inaugural experimental satellite launch vehicle, featuring an all-solid, four-stage design.
- **Specifications:** SLV-3 weighed 17 tonnes and stood at a height of 22 meters, capable of placing payloads up to 40 kg class into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- **Flight Characteristics:** SLV-3 utilized open loop guidance with a stored pitch program to control its trajectory during flight, ensuring it followed a predetermined path accurately.
- **Legacy:** The success of SLV-3 paved the way for more advanced Indian launch vehicle projects, including the Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV), Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)..

Central, state governments have no authority to tinker with list of Scheduled Castes: SC

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the states cannot make changes to the Scheduled Caste List published under Article 341 of the Constitution.

Article 341 of the Constitution

- **About:** Article 341 addresses the recognition and identification of Scheduled Castes (SCs), historically marginalized communities subject to social discrimination.
- **Presidential Power to Specify SCs:** Article 341(1) mandates the President, after consultation with the State Governor, to specify SCs through public notification.
- **Parliamentary Oversight:** Article 341(2) stipulates that any amendments to the SC list must be enacted through parliamentary law, reinforcing the separation of powers.
- **Legislative Control Over SC List:** Any changes to the SC list, including additions, deletions, or modifications, require parliamentary legislation and cannot be altered through executive orders.
- **Amendment Power:** The power to amend or alter the SC list specified under Article 341 rests exclusively with the Parliament, not with the central government or the President.
- **State Authority and Limitations:** The State government had no competence/authority/power to tinker with the lists of Scheduled Castes published under Article 341 of the Constitution.
- **Judicial Interpretation:** The State Backward Commission may recommend the inclusion of a caste or group into the SC category, but such recommendations do not grant states the authority to implement changes independently.

SPECIAL COUNSEL (IN THE US)

A lawyer chosen to look into cases in which the regular prosecutorial agency has a conflict of interest

SAIMA MEHTA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A FEDERAL judge in Florida dismissed the classified documents case against former US President Donald Trump on Monday, siding with defence lawyers who argued that the special counsel who filed the charges was illegally appointed by the Department of Justice (DoJ). Trump was accused of keeping classified documents in his private possession even after he vacated office in January 2021.

What is a special counsel?

A special counsel is often appointed for cases of suspected misconduct involving top government officials, or for other matters of great sensitivity, where it is essential that the prosecutor remain unbiased. The origin of the position can be traced to the early 1970s to the Watergate scandal during the presidency of Richard Nixon.

Attorney General Elliot Richardson named Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox to look into the alleged illegal activities in the White House. When Nixon wanted Cox to resign, the AG refused, leading to the notorious "Saturday Night Massacre", which saw both Richardson and his deputy resign.

The use of special counsel continued during the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s, under President Ronald Reagan. Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh examined the illegal sale of arms facilitated by senior US officials in the Reagan administration, who used the deals' proceeds to support anti-communist groups in Nicaragua. Several high-level officials would eventually be convicted by Walsh, and sent to prison.

How are special counsel appointed? What are their powers?

The power to select special counsel comes from various federal statutes such as the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the Whistleblower Protection Act of 2011, The Hatch Act of 1939, and the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act of 1994. Together, these statutes give the DoJ the authority to bring in outside legal experts for intricate and politically sensitive investigations.

Special counsel are chosen for their integrity and legal knowledge, and they conduct their own investigations. Special counsel function with significant autonomy, crucial for protecting important investigations from political meddling. However, major decisions made by them are subject to a possible veto by the AG, who also has the power to terminate their appointment for any wrongdoing.

What happened in the Trump case?

US District Judge Aileen Cannon declared that the decision to appoint special counsel Jack Smith, and provide him with funding, was unconstitutional.

She wrote in her judgment: "The Superseding Indictment is DISMISSED because Special Counsel Smith's appointment violates the Appointments Clause of the United States Constitution." She said that the US Constitution gives only Congress or the President the authority to appoint a special counsel, not the AG.

The judgment questions the established method by which special counsel have been appointed thus far. The fact that the AG, who is chosen by the President, appoints a special counsel raises questions with regards to the counsel's impartiality.

- **Context:** A judge dismissed the criminal case against the former President of the USA, citing concerns over the special counsel's appointment.

Special Counsel

- **About:** A special counsel, previously known as a Special Prosecutor or Independent Counsel, investigates cases of suspected misconduct, particularly when regular prosecutorial agencies face conflicts of interest, ensuring impartiality.
- **Function:** They handle sensitive matters involving top government officials or significant issues, aiming to conduct unbiased investigations free from external influence.
- **Historical Context:** The role emerged prominently post-Watergate, exemplified by Archibald Cox's appointment, highlighting the need for independent scrutiny in high-profile cases.
- **Legal Framework:** Governed by statutes like the Appointments Clause and various federal laws, special counsels operate under a framework ensuring autonomy within defined limits, overseen by the Attorney General.

Forms the Basis of Special Counsels Powers

- **Statutory Authority:** Derived from federal laws such as the Civil Service Reform Act and the Whistleblower Protection Act, which safeguard federal employees and provide mechanisms for addressing misconduct.
- **Constitutional Framework:** Selection of special counsels adheres to the US Constitution's Appointments Clause, allowing department heads like the Attorney General to appoint them as "junior officers" without Senate approval.
- **Reporting:** Special counsels conclude their investigations autonomously and submit confidential reports to the Attorney General, preserving the integrity and confidentiality of their findings.

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

On political representation of women

Have women been fairly represented in Parliament in independent India? Should political parties provide internal reservations to increase women's political participation? When will the 106th constitutional amendment be implemented?

EXPLAINER
Rangarajan, R

The story so far: In the recently concluded general elections in the U.K., a record 263 women MPs (40%) have been elected to the House of Commons. The South African National Assembly has around 45% women representation, while the U.S. House of Representatives has 29%. Universal suffrage was achieved in various parts of the world after prolonged political movements. New Zealand was a self-governing unit under British rule was the first to grant universal women's suffrage in 1893. The U.K. itself provided all its women the right to vote only in 1928. The U.S. granted equal voting rights through the nineteenth amendment only in 1920.

What about women representatives in independent India? India as a sovereign republic provided the right to vote for all its women right from the first general elections in 1952. While the right to vote was provided to all women since the commencement of the Constitution, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies has been far from satisfactory. The percentage of women MPs in the Lok Sabha had been very low between 5% and 10% till 2014. It rose marginally to 12% in 2014 and currently stands at 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha. The representation in State Legislative Assemblies is even poorer with the national average being around 9%. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution in 1992/1993 provided for one-third reservation for women in panchayats and municipalities. However, attempts between 1996 and 2008 to provide similar reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies were unsuccessful.

How do women MPs fare worldwide? Women representation in parliament varies across different democracies. It is a



Long fight: From a protest demanding the women's reservation bill in 2018, via women's

Country wise data on women representation*

Women representation in parliament varies across different democracies

Country	% of elected women	Quota in Parliament	Quota in political parties
Sweden	46%	No	No
South Africa	45%	No	No
Australia	28%	No	No
France	18%	No	No
Germany	15%	No	No
U.S.	29%	No	No
U.K.	40%	No	No
India	14%	No	No
Pakistan	22%	No	No
Bangladesh	17%	No	No

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023

Voluntary or legislated quotas within political parties are unlikely to yield the desired representation in our country.

women candidates. Opponents of having a reserved quota in parliament for women argue that it would be seen as women not competing on merit. As the seats reserved for women would be treated after each delimitation, it may also reduce the incentive for MPs to work hard to nurture their constituencies. The table above provides a snapshot of women's representation in some democracies across the world. As can be seen, countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan that have quotas in parliament have poorer than countries with political party quotas.

What is the 106th amendment? As on April 2024, India ranks 143 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments' published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organisation for national parliaments. The Trinamool Congress has the highest proportion of women MPs in the current Lok Sabha at 38%. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and principal Opposition Congress party have around 12% each. Nam: Tamil Nadu, a State

THE GIST

India as a sovereign republic provided the right to vote for all its women right from the first general elections in 1952.

The important methods used across the world to ensure higher representation of women are (a) voluntary or legislated compulsory quotas for candidates within political parties and (b) quota in parliament through reservation of seats.

As on April 2024, India ranks 143 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments' published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organisation for national parliaments.

party in Tamil Nadu, has been following a voluntary quota of 50% for women candidates in the last three general elections. However, voluntary or legislated quotas within political parties are unlikely to yield the desired representation in our country. This is why the Parliament through the 106th constitutional amendment, in September 2023, provided for one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies. This would ensure a fair representation of women in legislatures that would increase gender sensibility in parliamentary processes and legislation. It would also hopefully increase the number of women Ministers in the Centre and States.

This reservation shall come into effect based on the delimitation exercise after the relevant figures of the first Census conducted after the commencement of this act is published. Hence, the Census which is overdue since 2011 should be conducted without any further delay to ensure that this reservation is implemented starting with the general elections in 2029.

Rangarajan, R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently teaches civil service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.

Context: Party of India, led a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, demanding 50% women's reservation in Parliament and Assemblies.

Women's Political Representation in India

- **Voting Rights for Women:** India as a sovereign republic provided the right to vote for all its women right from the first general elections in 1952.
- **Representation Gap in Legislatures:** While the right to vote was provided to all women since the commencement of the Constitution, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies has been far from satisfactory.
- **Low Percentage of Women MPs:** The % of women MPs in the Lok Sabha had been very low between 5% and 10% till 2004. It rose marginally to 12% in 2014 and currently stands at about 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha.
- **Poor Representation in State Assemblies:** The representation in State Legislative Assemblies is even poorer with the national average being around 9%.
- **Reservation in Local Governance:** The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution in 1992/1993 provided for one-third reservation for women in panchayats and municipalities.
- **India's Global Ranking in Women Representation:** As of April 2024, India is ranked 143rd in the 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments,' according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

106th Constitutional Amendment

- **About:** It provided for one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies.
- **Objective:** This reservation aims to ensure fair representation, enhance gender sensitivity in legislative processes, and potentially increase the number of women Ministers at both the Centre and State levels.

Global Scenario

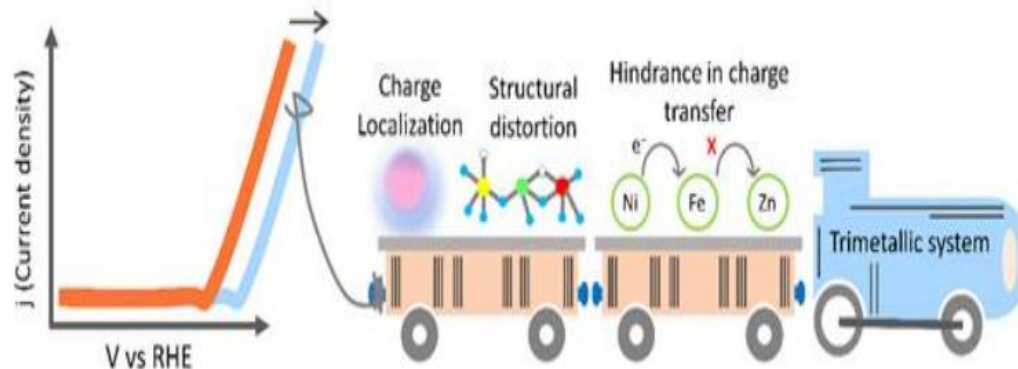
- **United Kingdom:** In the recent U.K. general elections, a record 263 women MPs (40%) were elected to the House of Commons.
- **South Africa:** African National Assembly boasts around 45% women representation.
- **U.S.A:** The U.S. House of Representatives has 29% women representation.
- **Milestones in Universal Suffrage:** Universal suffrage was achieved through prolonged political movements, with New Zealand granting women the right to vote in 1893, the U.S. in 1920, and the U.K. in 1928.

Bimetallic NiFe systems are better than doped ones for water splitting claims a study conducted by Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) under the Department of Science and Technology (DST)

Context: A new study claims that a bimetallic Nickel-Iron layered double hydroxide system is the most efficient for oxygen production through water splitting.

Bimetallic NiFe Systems

- **Introduction:** A bimetallic Nickel Iron layered double hydroxide (NiFe LDH) system has been identified as highly efficient for O₂ production via water splitting.
- **Composition:** NiFe LDHs integrate nickel (Ni) and iron (Fe) at a molecular level, featuring positively charged metal hydroxide layers interspersed with anions and water molecules.
- **Catalytic Properties:** These systems exhibit robust catalytic activity for the OER, critical for efficient water splitting due to their high surface area and catalytic sites.
- **Applications:** Widely utilized in electrochemical cells for producing hydrogen and oxygen, NiFe systems also find applications in batteries, supercapacitors, and other energy conversion devices.
- **Advantages:** Cost-effective compared to precious metal catalysts like platinum and iridium, NiFe systems leverage abundant and inexpensive metals, enhancing sustainability in catalysis and energy technologies.



Research

- **Conducted by:** The Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) under the auspices of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- **Key Finding:**
 - NiFe LDH efficiently produces O₂ through water splitting, negating the need for trimetallic solutions to enhance productivity.
 - Water splitting is an eco-friendly method to generate pure H₂ and O₂ at scale without ecological harm.
 - Scientists have targeted the Hydrogen Evolution Reaction (HER) and Oxygen Evolution Reaction (OER) to boost water splitting efficiency.
 - NiFe Layered Double Hydroxide (LDH), they synthesized two other trimetallic systems ZnNiFe layered double hydroxide and CoNiFe LDH, and investigated its electrocatalytic activity in 1M KOH.

Behind heavy rain in large parts of India: monsoon trough shift, westerlies

ANJALI MARAR
BENGALURU, JULY 17

LAST WEEK, at least 80% of India received rainfall, with heavy to very heavy spells lashing Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, the coastal areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka, Kerala, and Lakshadweep.

Much of this rainfall has been brought by the monsoon, which covered the entire country by July 2. Since the start of July, there have been multiple favourable weather systems that have led to an increase in rainfall activity – by keeping the monsoon either active or vigorous – over several regions. These include southern peninsular, east, northeast, and central India.

What factors are causing more rainfall?
There have been two main contributors

to the enhanced rainfall. One is the continuous incoming of moisture-laden strong westerly winds from the Arabian Sea.

The other is the position of the monsoon trough – a semi-permanent, low-pressure area extending between Pakistan and the Bay of Bengal during the monsoon season – which usually oscillates north-south within the season. Whenever it moves towards the south of its normal position, as it has done in the present case, more rainfall can take place in central, eastern, and peninsular India. When it shifts towards the north, the Himalayan foothills are likely to receive more rainfall while the rest of India sees a drop in the rainfall.

Apart from these two factors, other weather systems have also contributed to the enhanced rainfall. These are:
■ The intermittent development of a wind shear zone – where winds move with different velocities and directions – between central and peninsular India.

WETTEST, DRIEST STATES & UNION TERRITORIES

Wettest states/UTs*			Driest States/UTs*		
State/UT	Rainfall (mm)	Rainfall departure (%)	State/UT	Rainfall (mm)	Rainfall departure (%)
Goa	2241.9	49	Chandigarh	147	-50
Sikkim	1042.9	49	Manipur	250.8	-46
Andhra	232.5	43	Himachal Pradesh	139.8	-39
Meghalaya	1512.4	23	Punjab	87.5	-38
A&N Islands	776	23	Haryana	84.8	-36
Karnataka	386.6	15	Mizoram	653.8	-35

(*Jan 1 - Jul 17). Source: India Meteorological Department (IMD)

north Kerala for more than a week now.

■ The development of a low pressure system over the west-central Bay of Bengal, off the Odisha coast, on Monday. The system moved over Chhattisgarh and adjoining Vidarbha on Tuesday, and over south-

east Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday.

also received heavy rainfall.

What is the current rainfall status?

The IMD's rainfall statistics indicate that the all-India rainfall went from 242 mm on July 9 to 305.8 mm on July 17. The country's rainfall stands at 97% of the normal for this time of the season.

Overall, 17 states have either received normal or above-normal rainfall this season. But there are a few states and UTs, such as Odisha, Haryana, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, and Jharkhand, along with high-rainfall recording states such as Kerala, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram, where the rainfall has been deficient, so far. This is also because normal values for July rainfall in many of these states are high.

Since July 13, some heavy rainfall events have been recorded along the country's west coast, especially in the Konkan, Goa, ghats of Madhya Maharashtra, coastal Karnataka, and Kerala. Uttarakhand, west Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and West Bengal have

What is the forecast?

The southwest monsoon will continue to remain active throughout this week over the southern peninsula, the Himalayan states, and in eastern India. A fresh low pressure system will develop over the northwest Bay of Bengal around Friday, and its likely landward movement will keep the monsoon momentum high. As a result, rainfall will persist over eastern and central India during the next five days.

The monsoon trough will remain towards the south of its normal position during the next four to five days. This can lead to very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall (115 mm to 204 mm in 24 hours) in regions such as Kutch, Saurashtra, Konkan, Goa, coastal and south interior Karnataka – IMD has issued a 'red' alert for these areas.

Rainfall activity over large parts of India is expected to be subdued in early August.

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Factors Behind the Heavy Rain

- **Westerly Winds:** Continuous influx of moisture-laden westerly winds from the Arabian Sea has significantly contributed to the enhanced rainfall.
- **Monsoon Trough Position:** The monsoon trough's southward shift has increased rainfall in central, eastern, and peninsular India.
- **Northward Trough Shift:** When the monsoon trough shifts northward, the Himalayan foothills receive more rainfall, while the rest of India experiences less.
- **Additional Weather Systems:** Other weather systems have also played a role in the widespread rainfall, excluding extreme northern India.
 - The persistence of an off-shore trough (a shallow trough of low pressure, which develops along India's coast during the monsoon) between south Gujarat and north Kerala for more than a week now.
 - The intermittent development of a wind shear zone where winds move with different velocities and directions along latitudes 20 ° N between central and peninsular India.

Context: Recently, at least 80% of India received rainfall, with heavy to very heavy spells lashing Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra's coast, Karnataka, Kerala, and Lakshadweep.

Monsoon Climate of India

- **About:** India's climate is characterized as 'monsoon' type, predominantly found in South and Southeast Asia.
- **Seasonal Divisions:** India's climate has four seasonal divisions, with two dedicated to the monsoon period.
- **Southwest Monsoon Season:** The southwest monsoon brings seasonal rainfall from June to September.
- **Retreating Monsoon Season:** The retreating monsoons occur during October and November.

Critically endangered Jerdon's courser not spotted in a decade

Context: Jerdon's Courser is exclusively endemic to Andhra Pradesh, specifically within the Sri Lankamalleswara wildlife sanctuary in Kadapa. However, this elusive bird has not been visually spotted in over a decade.

Jerdon's Courser

- **About:** It is a nocturnal cursorial bird endemic to the Eastern Ghats of India.
- **Scientific Name:** *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*
- **Historical Significance:** It was considered extinct from the early 20th century until its rediscovery in 1986.
- **Habitat:** It inhabits open patches within scrub-forests.
- **Distribution:** Found exclusively in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Physical Features:**
 - Delicate lapwing-like bird with a large eye and a short, bicolored bill.
 - Upper plumage grey-brown, chin and throat whitish, fore-neck rufous, with a white band separating it from brown breast.
 - Call is a short series of two-noted whistles "tuick-tuoo."
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN Red List - Critically Endangered



- Jerdon's courser was first recorded by TC Jerdon in 1848 from the hilly country above the Eastern Ghats off Nellore and in Kadapa

- The bird was also spotted in the consequent decades

- But for almost 86 years, there was no sighting of it until it was rediscovered near Reddipalli in Kadapa in 1986

- Very little is known about the behaviour of the Jerdon's courser

- Two samples of its droppings were found to consist mainly of body parts of *Macrotermes* termites and ants

- Nothing is known of the breeding ecology of the bird

- No nests or young birds have ever been recorded

- Scrub jungle clearance in and around the protected areas are the main and best documented threats to the Jerdon's courser

- It has large eyes, and a short yellow bill with black tip and yellow legs



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