

# HINDU EDITORIAL

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2024



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# India's Inflation Challenge

**India's inflation control measures, especially regarding food prices, require reevaluation due to their significant impact on the economy and household expenditures.**

The critical issue of inflation in India, particularly the role of food prices in shaping inflationary trends. The recent suggestions to exclude food prices from the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) inflation



targets may undermine efforts to control inflation effectively. Food prices have been highly volatile, with a sharp year-on-year increase recently. This has elevated overall inflation to historically high levels, even before the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war.

The practice of 'inflation targeting,' where the RBI adjusts its policies to meet a specific inflation target, has faced challenges, especially with food inflation. The ignoring food price fluctuations in inflation measurement is misguided since food comprises a significant portion of household expenditures. It notes that, unlike in other economies where food inflation is less impactful, India's unique economic structure makes food price changes crucial to overall inflation. Moreover, historical data suggests that the RBI's measures have not significantly impacted inflation rates.

The more comprehensive approach to inflation control that considers the broader implications of agricultural production and supply chain dynamics, urging policymakers to address the root causes of inflation rather than merely focusing on monetary policy adjustments.

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# Social Justice in Bureaucracy

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## **The need for structural changes in civil services to ensure fair representation of marginalized groups in India's bureaucracy.**

The underrepresentation of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in India's bureaucratic decision-making, especially highlighted by the absence of SC/ST officers in the framing of the 2024 Budget proposals. This situation reflects the broader issue of upper caste domination in the civil services. Despite



political discussions around this topic, the core issue remains unresolved: the lack of SC/ST officers in senior positions due to systemic barriers.

The current civil service structure favors those who join at a younger age, primarily from general categories, due to the existing age and retirement policies. SC/ST candidates, who often enter later in life due to various social and economic challenges, are disadvantaged as they must retire before reaching the top echelons of the bureaucracy.

To address this disparity, a fixed tenure system for all civil servants, irrespective of their entry age. Such a system would ensure that all officers, regardless of caste or background, have equal opportunities to reach senior positions. This proposal includes revising the retirement age and implementing stringent medical examinations to ensure fairness. The article concludes by urging policymakers to consider these reforms to promote social justice in the bureaucracy and ensure diverse representation at the highest levels of government.

# Migrant Realities in Gig Economy

**The challenges and exploitation faced by migrant workers in Karnataka's booming gig economy, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The increasing presence of migrant workers in Karnataka's gig economy, particularly those employed by home delivery services and aggregator platforms like Uber and Ola. The pandemic led to a significant rise in the



number of migrants engaging in gig work as traditional job opportunities dwindled. However, these workers often face exploitation, earning less due to platform policies that favor local workers and penalize migrants who speak out against unfair practices.

The Karnataka government proposed a 'quota-for-local' bill, aimed at ensuring job security for locals, but its impact on migrant gig workers remains unclear. The article points out that while such legislation might protect local workers, it may further marginalize migrant workers, leading to more precarious working conditions. The lack of local support and the dominance of non-local migrant workers in certain regions exacerbate the situation.

The various platforms and delivery companies are adopting schemes to reduce their reliance on migrant workers, either by encouraging local participation or offering alternative models such as fleet ownership. Ultimately, the editorial questions whether these developments will improve or worsen the already precarious situation for migrant workers in Karnataka's gig sector.

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# Critical Assembly Elections

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**The upcoming assembly elections in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) are crucial for India's democratic processes and may significantly influence the political landscape.**

The importance of the assembly elections in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), scheduled between September 18 and October 1, 2024. These elections are particularly significant as



they will test the effectiveness and credibility of India's democratic institutions, especially the Election Commission of India (ECI). This will be the first election in J&K since it was restructured into a Union Territory (UT) in 2019, following the abrogation of Article 370.

In Haryana, a three-phase poll will determine the state's political future, with results to be declared on October 4. The elections, coinciding with the first year of the 2024 general elections, hold political implications beyond the two states. In J&K, the election is seen as a crucial step toward re-establishing a stable political process amid ongoing insurgency and violence.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has taken strategic steps in Haryana, including leadership changes, to mitigate dissatisfaction among voters. The Congress party, on the other hand, hopes to capitalize on anti-incumbency sentiments and internal disarray within the BJP. The outcome of these elections could have broader implications for national politics, potentially influencing the power dynamics within the BJP, its alliances, and its relationship with the opposition. As the stakes are high, these elections are expected to shape the political discourse in the coming months.



# Protecting Indian Investments

**The legal frameworks available to safeguard Indian investments in Bangladesh amidst political uncertainties.**

There is potential risks to Indian investments in Bangladesh due to the political instability following Sheikh Hasina's resignation. Indian companies have significantly invested in various sectors, and these investments could be jeopardized by new regulatory measures or a hostile shift in government policies. The three key legal



frameworks available to protect these investments: the domestic laws of the host country, contracts between investors and the host state, and international law, particularly bilateral investment treaties (BITs). The India-Bangladesh BIT, signed in 2009, plays a crucial role in protecting Indian investments by preventing unlawful expropriation and ensuring fair and equitable treatment (FET). However, the Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN) introduced by India and Bangladesh in 2017 dilute these protections by focusing more on the capital-importing country's regulatory rights. The editorial argues that while the immediate concern is Bangladesh, India must strengthen its investment protection mechanisms globally to safeguard its expanding outbound investments.

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# Governor's Role in Prosecutions

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**The editorial examines the Karnataka Governor's decision to sanction an investigation against the Chief Minister, raising questions about the political and legal implications.**

The editorial discusses the recent decision by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to grant approval for the investigation and prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on corruption charges. This decision has sparked debate over whether a



Governor can act independently against a serving Chief Minister, especially when it contradicts the advice of the Council of Ministers. The legal precedents allow a Governor to arrive at an independent conclusion if bias or improper consideration is evident from the Council. However, in this case, political motivations are suspected, as the opposition has demanded Siddaramaiah's resignation. The Karnataka High Court has intervened, asking the trial court to wait for Siddaramaiah's challenge to the Governor's order.

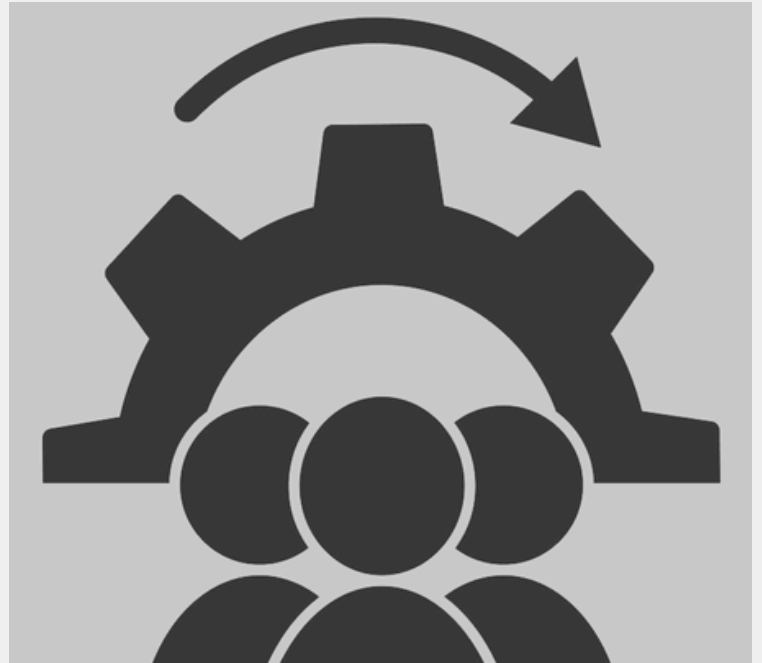
The editorial also addresses the broader issue of corruption investigations, emphasizing the need for these probes to be credible and free from political influence. The Prevention of Corruption Act, particularly Section 17A, limits the initiation of investigations against public servants without prior approval, raising questions about the Governor's decision. The public discourse on corruption in India is marred by suspicion and politicization, making it crucial that any criminal process remains independent and credible. The editorial calls for a careful approach to ensure justice is served without political interference.



# Sustainable Mass Employment

**The editorial discusses a strategic roadmap for creating sustainable mass employment in India, emphasizing skill development, community engagement, and institutional reforms.**

The article outlines a comprehensive approach to sustainable mass employment in India, emphasizing the need for evidence-based policies that address the bottom of the wage pyramid. It highlights the importance of



skill development, education, and decentralised community action in creating dignified and sustainable employment opportunities. The article suggests creating a report on the skill training needs of every youth and involving professionals in these efforts. It also stresses the need to integrate need-based vocational courses alongside undergraduate programs and standardize healthcare professional training according to international standards. The role of community institutions in running childcare centers, training creche care-givers, and fostering local entrepreneurship is underscored. Additionally, the article advocates for incentivizing start-ups and innovation, particularly in sectors like banking, through measures like credit facilitation and new financing products. Finally, the importance of integrating technology and enterprise education in schools is highlighted, to prepare students for a rapidly evolving job market.

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# Regressive Safety Measures

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**The editorial criticizes the reduction of women's work hours as a misguided approach to ensuring their safety, advocating for more substantive measures.**

The editorial condemns the recent directive by the West Bengal government to minimize night duty for women in the wake of a brutal incident involving a female doctor in Kolkata. It argues that such regressive measures will not enhance women's safety but



instead remove them from the workforce, exacerbating their economic vulnerability. The article emphasizes the low labor force participation rate for urban women in India, highlighting that reducing their work hours will further hinder their financial independence. It criticizes the superficial safety measures like separate rest rooms and mobile apps, suggesting that comprehensive and effective safety protocols should already be in place. The editorial underscores the need for a broader societal change and stricter implementation of laws to combat gender violence, referencing the 2012 Delhi rape case and subsequent legal reforms that have proven insufficient. The article advocates for campaigns and awareness efforts to foster a culture of gender justice and calls for governments to implement meaningful safety measures for women in the workplace.

# Moral Pressure on Human Rights

**The editorial discusses the role of moral pressure and international law in ensuring compliance with human rights, especially against authoritarian regimes.**

The article explores the two main approaches to enforcing human rights compliance: economic sanctions or military action, and moral pressure. While economic sanctions and military force are effective against powerful nations, moral pressure is the key



strategy for influencing regimes lacking international power. The practice of "naming and shaming," highlighting violations by specific governments, can sometimes push them towards compliance, although authoritarian regimes often resist such pressure. The article emphasizes that while moral pressure, especially from international bodies like Amnesty International or the United Nations, can bring human rights violations to light, it frequently faces resistance. Governments may react by denying allegations, making superficial changes, or dismissing international scrutiny. Despite these challenges, the importance of moral pressure remains undeniable. However, there is a need for a stronger global consensus and legal mechanisms that protect human rights universally, even in the face of political and cultural opposition. The article concludes by stressing the necessity for the state to uphold human rights as a binding principle, not just as a moral obligation, but as a fundamental aspect of legal and political governance in a rapidly evolving world.

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# Hydropower and Environmental Costs

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**The article emphasizes the need to factor in environmental costs when planning and developing hydropower projects, particularly in vulnerable regions like Sikkim.**

The editorial highlights the recurring environmental challenges faced by hydropower projects, focusing on recent landslides in Sikkim that damaged the Teesta-5 hydropower station. This incident, coupled with a similar disaster



last October, underscores the vulnerability of hydropower infrastructure in the region. The Teesta River, which traverses Sikkim and West Bengal before entering Bangladesh, is a critical resource for hydropower projects, with 47 proposals in the past three decades. However, only a handful have been realized, primarily due to the complex challenges of balancing environmental risks, public perception, and profitability. The editorial points to the Teesta-3 project, where cost-saving measures like using a concrete-faced rock fill dam instead of a more robust concrete gravity dam led to its failure. This case exemplifies the broader issue of inadequate environmental impact assessments and the need for thorough risk evaluation in such projects. The article argues that these assessments must transparently convey the true costs involved, ensuring projects are not only economically viable but also environmentally sustainable. Such an approach would enhance public trust and ensure the long-term success of hydropower initiatives in sensitive ecological regions.

# Waqf Bill Reforms

**The 2024 Waqf Bill aims to address issues and introduce positive changes to the family waqf system, balancing tradition with modern reforms.**

The Waqf Bill 2024, recently referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee, seeks to address various concerns surrounding the family waqf system. Key issues include the abolition of waqf by usage, protection against illegal encroachment, and the inclusion of women and non-Muslims in waqf boards. While the Bill



faces opposition, it also introduces positive changes such as digitization and the inclusion of family waqfs in the legal framework. The Bill also acknowledges the colonial impact on waqfs and aims to modernize the system. Family waqfs, historically used to protect family property and ensure its charitable use, have faced varying degrees of restriction and abolition across the Muslim world. The proposed Section 3A(2) of the 2024 Bill addresses inheritance rights, allowing a Muslim to create a family waqf only if he does not exclude his heirs. This reform aligns with broader legal trends and aims to integrate the waqf system more effectively into contemporary Indian law. The article emphasizes that while preserving the unique tradition of waqf, the Bill's changes are essential for adapting to modern societal needs.

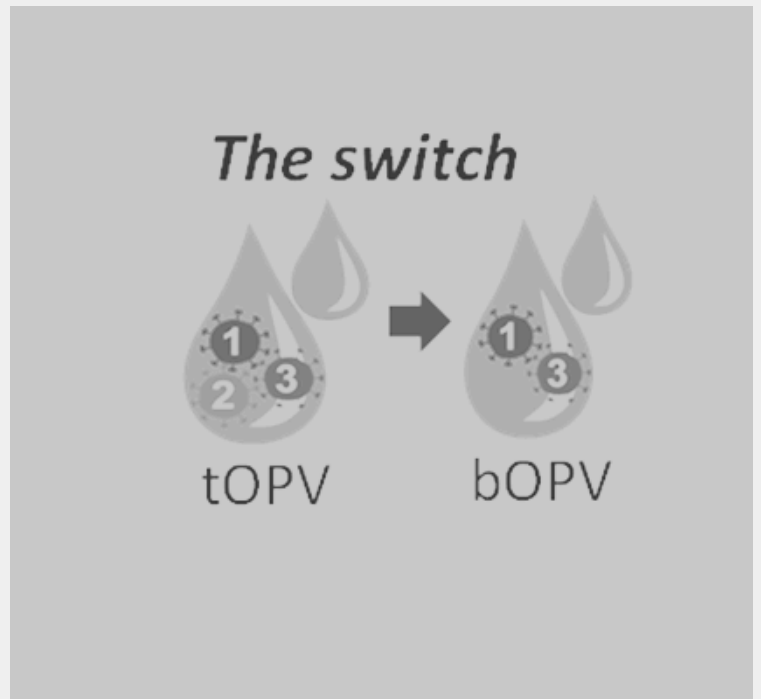
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# Switch to IPV

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**The editorial highlights the need for India to transition from oral polio vaccine (OPV) to inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) due to risks associated with vaccine-derived poliovirus.**

The editorial discusses a recent case of acute flaccid paralysis in a child from Meghalaya, likely caused by polio, raising concerns about India's continued use of the oral polio vaccine (OPV). In April 2022, a similar case involving



vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) was detected in Kolkata, suggesting that the virus might be circulating among the community, particularly if it is a circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV) rather than an isolated immunodeficiency-related case (iVDPV). Despite genetic sequencing efforts, the exact nature of the virus in the Meghalaya case remains unclear, raising concerns over India's polio vaccination strategy. The editorial emphasizes the absence of official reports confirming whether the virus is vaccine-derived or linked to wild poliovirus. Given the eradication of wild poliovirus types 2 and 3 globally, and the lack of WPV1 detection in India, it is improbable that the current case is due to WPV1 unless imported. The piece argues that India's reliance on OPV, which contains live but attenuated virus strains, poses risks, particularly in immunocompromised children who should not receive OPV. The editorial urges India to switch exclusively to the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), which many developed countries adopted decades ago, to prevent further cases of vaccine-derived poliovirus and ensure better public health safety.