



THE HINDU EDITORIAL

WEEKLY COMPILATION
04- 09

| 2024



04/03/2024

FACTS AND STATISTICS

GDP NUMBERS

BRING CHEER IN ELECTION YEAR, BUT NEED MORE SCRUTINY

The National Statistical Office's (NSO) recent release of national income data has sparked both enthusiasm and confusion. The October-December quarter witnessed a robust 8.4% year-on-year growth in real gross domestic product (GDP), prompting market cheers. However, discrepancies exceeding 100 basis points between official estimates and economists' projections have left some perplexed. The NSO's revised estimates for the first and second quarters of the fiscal year also indicate 8.2% and 8.1% growth, respectively, and forecast a full-year real GDP growth of 7.6%, a 30 basis points increase from January's estimate.

The revisions are attributed to adjustments in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 estimates, raising the previous year's real GDP growth to 9.7% but scaling down the next year's expansion to 7%. The productive sectors experienced a slowdown in the third-quarter gross value added (GVA) growth to 6.5%, mainly due to a contraction in the agriculture sector. The GVA growth, 190 basis points slower than GDP growth, provides a more accurate depiction of the economy's health. On the expenditure side, private consumption grew by 3.5%, while government consumption expenditure contracted by 3.2%, indicating a lack of traction. Amidst the approaching general election, a thorough analysis beyond the headlines is essential to understand the true state of the economy, relying on multiple statistical sets.

05/03/2024

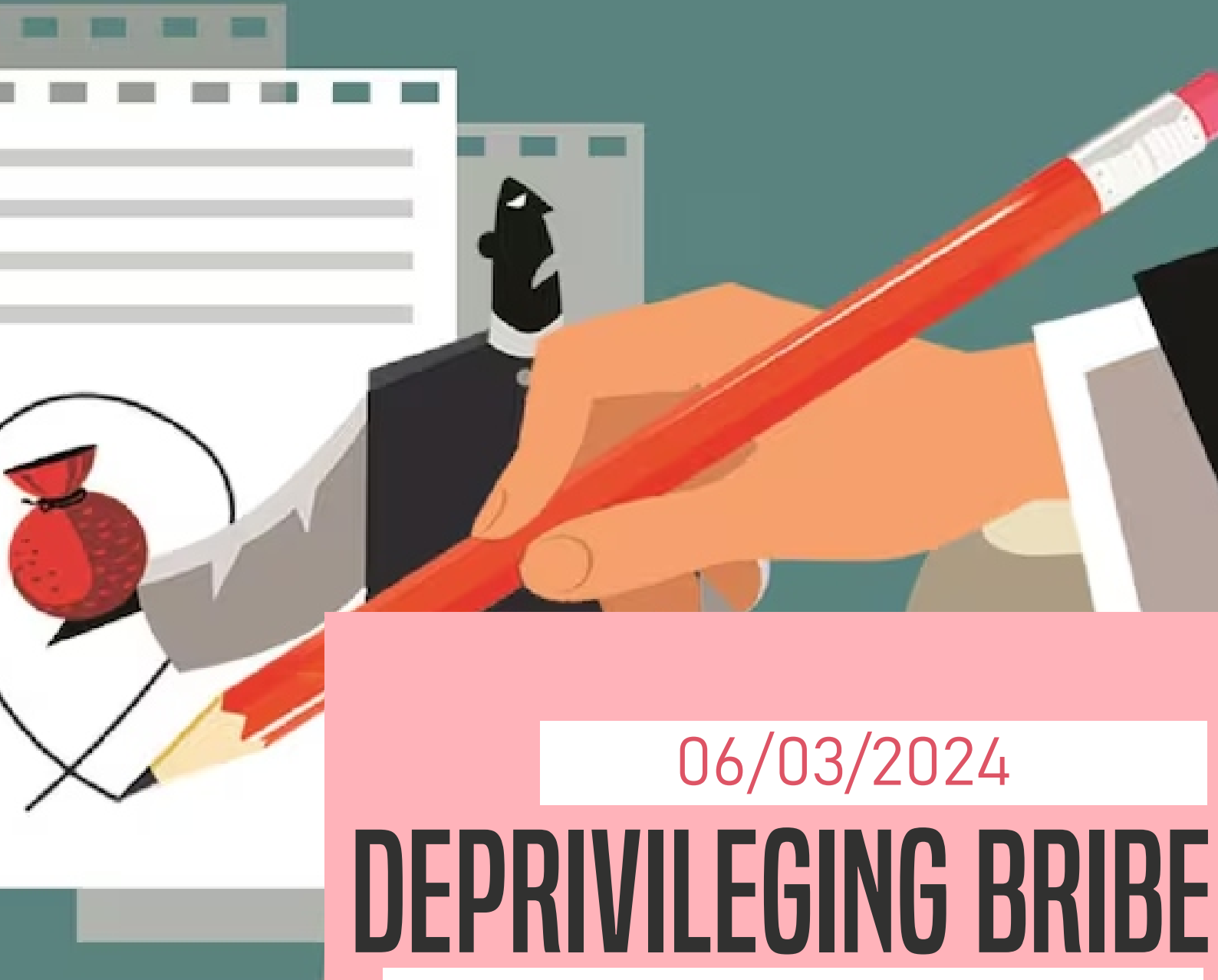


TEPID TRADE-OFFS

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE TO FOSTER FREE AND FAIR TRADE.

The World Trade Organization's (WTO) 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi concluded with limited progress on critical global trade issues, despite extended deliberations. The WTO faced challenges in fulfilling its mandate amidst a tumultuous global trade landscape marked by conflicts, disruptions in shipping routes, and supply chain recalibrations. The declaration from the conference acknowledged challenges like the need for open and resilient supply chains but lacked substantial measures. Disagreements persisted among the WTO's 164 member-countries on issues carried from the previous conference, including India's concerns regarding agriculture and fisheries subsidies. While progress in agriculture discussions was noted, the exemption from customs duties for e-commerce, opposed by India, will continue for at least two more years. The resurrection of the WTO's dispute resolution body, dormant for four years, remains uncertain. India successfully resisted a China-led attempt, supported by over 120 countries, to introduce an investment facilitation pact. However, the overall effectiveness of the WTO is questioned, urging both India and the WTO to address challenges to remain relevant in a polarized world.



06/03/2024

DEPRIVILEGING BRIBE

VOTERS SHOULD KNOW THAT MPS

do not act under Monetary inducement.

The Supreme Court of India has rectified a controversial 25-year-old judgment in the JMM bribery case, which differentiated between 'bribe-givers' and 'bribe-takers.' The earlier ruling allowed prosecution of those paying bribes to MPs but granted immunity to recipients, citing constitutional privileges for parliamentary actions. However, the recent decision by a seven-member Constitution Bench overturns this, emphasizing probity in parliamentary functioning. The court clarified that parliamentary privileges, outlined in Article 105 and Article 194 for MPs and State legislators, respectively, aim to protect freedom of speech and independence but do not extend to bribery. The 1998 rationale, fearing consequences of limiting privileges, is dismissed. The verdict asserts that potential misuse remains unchanged, recognizing the court's jurisdiction to prosecute members for bribery. Additionally, the Bench affirms the protection of voting in a Rajya Sabha election as a legislative privilege under Article 194. The decision aligns with public expectations, ensuring elected members are not influenced by monetary inducements.



07/03/2024

FREE OF GUILT SAIBABA'S ACQUITTAL UNDERScores

THAT THERE CAN BE NO **GUILT BY ASSOCIATION.**

The acquittal of former Delhi University professor G.N. Saibaba and five others by the Bombay High Court reveals the misuse of stringent laws, such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), based on vague associations with or sympathy for extremist groups. The court's decision underscores the importance of procedural safeguards against the severity of the UAPA. The case highlights the law's bail-denying features, allowing prolonged imprisonment on weak evidence. Some accused were held since 2013, one died during the appeal, and Saibaba was arrested in 2014. The Supreme Court's swift intervention in 2022 to stay their discharge raised concerns. The recent judgment repudiates the prosecution's case, citing unproven seizures, inadequate evidence, and no links to terrorist activities. The court deems the UAPA sanctions as invalid due to a lack of independent review and faults the trial court for premature cognizance. Emphasizing the need for procedural safeguards, the court rejects convictions based solely on possession of literature without direct evidence of terrorist involvement under the UAPA.



A SLIPPERY SLOPE TOURISM IN WILDLIFE PARKS SHOULD NOT BE AT ODDS WITH CONSERVATION EFFORTS.

The Supreme Court of India has strongly criticized the Uttarakhand government for allowing the felling of 6,000 trees in Jim Corbett National Park to expand a tiger safari. The court deemed this collaboration between forest officials and a state politician a violation of conservation principles. Justice B.R. Gavai emphasized the importance of protecting tigers as indicators of ecosystem well-being, warning against ignoring events like illegal construction and tree felling. The judgment raises concerns about the link between political corruption and environmental damage, particularly in the context of wildlife park management and the compatibility of 'tiger safaris' with conservation efforts.

The court highlighted the threat posed by resorts near the park, playing loud music and disturbing wildlife. It mentioned the roles of expert bodies, the Central Zoo Authority and the National Tiger Conservation Authority, in overseeing wildlife conservation, supporting tiger safaris within established guidelines. The debate between eco-tourism and commercial tourism is discussed, with a caution against potential political capture. The court recommended the central government develop guidelines for safari conduct, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that prioritizes conservation over tourism, urging cautious messaging on this issue.



09/03/2024

DUBIOUS RESPONSE

**THE SBI'S REASONS TO DELAY PUBLICATION
OF DETAILS OF ELECTORAL BONDS DEFY BELIEF.**

The Supreme Court of India recently declared the Electoral Bond scheme unconstitutional, citing a violation of the right to information. The scheme, established in 2018, allowed anonymous political donations. The court mandated the State Bank of India (SBI), the sole authorized issuer of electoral bonds, to cease their issuance and demanded detailed information on recipients and purchases by March 6. However, the SBI, in response, requested an extension until the end of June 2024, well after the expected general election date. The bank claimed difficulties reconciling two sets of information and implied that only the number of bonds, not purchaser KYC details, was digitally stored. Contrary reports based on RTI queries indicated the bank stored donor data and issued unique codes for each bond, facilitating quick retrieval. The court, hearing a contempt petition against the SBI, is urged to ensure timely and comprehensive information disclosure before the upcoming election, emphasizing the need for transparency in political funding. As of March 2023, public information revealed that the Bharatiya Janata Party received 57% of bond donations, followed by the Congress with nearly 10%.