

# DAILY PT POINTERS

14 January, 2025



The Hindu-GS3(Economy)Page1

## Inflation falls to a 4-month low in Dec.

Food inflation eased marginally to 8.4%, but some critical items reported sharper price rise; inflation of edible oils and fats hit a 33-month high

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

India's retail inflation eased a bit to a four-month low of 5.22% in December from 5.5% in November, with food inflation cooling marginally from 9.04% in November to 8.4% last month, the National Statistics Office said on Monday.

Overall consumer prices were 4.6% higher in December for urban residents compared with 4.9% in November, while rural

### Subtle relief

Consumer price rise eased to a 4-month low of 5.22% in December 2024, on a marginal dip in food inflation



5.7%. While the RBI expects inflation to cool to 4.5% in this quarter, the latest data shows a 15-month low, marking the second month of deceleration from October's 15-

- India's retail inflation eased to 5.22% in December 2024, a four-month low, down from 5.5% in November. Food inflation also slightly decreased to 8.4% from 9.04%.
- Top items with the highest inflation were peas (89.12%), potatoes (68.23%), garlic (58.17%), coconut oil (45.41%), and cauliflower (39.42%).
- Inflation averaged 5.63% in Q3 2024-25, close to the RBI's estimate of 5.7%. Rural inflation was higher at 5.8%, while urban inflation was 4.6%.

The Hindu –GS2(Governance)-Page 4

## Odisha signs MoU to join States part of AB PM-JAY fold

After years of resistance by then ruling BJD, Majhi-led BJP govt. will now implement scheme in convergence with Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana

**Satyasundar Barik**  
BHUBANESWAR

**A**fter years of attempting to persuade the then Naveen Patnaik-led Biju Janata Dal (BJP) government to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, the Centre has finally signed a memorandum of understanding



Union Minister J.P. Nadda with Odisha CM Mohan Mahto during

- The Centre has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Odisha government, led by Mohan Charan Majhi's BJP, to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, after years of efforts.
- AB PM-JAY will be implemented in convergence with the existing Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) – in Odisha. It will provide a cover of ₹5 lakh per family per annum with additional ₹5 lakh for women members.



The Hindu –GS1(Places)-Page 4

## 15 Kanniyakumari fishermen detained near Diego Garcia

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KANNIYAKUMARI

Fifteen fishermen who had ventured into the sea from the Thengapattinam fishing harbour in Kanniyakumari district were reportedly detained near the Diego Garcia island, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), on January 9, for allegedly crossing the maritime boundary.

Sources said eight of the fishermen were from Thoothoor in Kanniyakumari while the remaining



The fishermen had put out to sea on December 29 from the Thengapattinam harbour on a mechanised boat.

The news of the detention left the families of the

- Fifteen fishermen who had ventured into the sea from the Thengapattinam fishing harbour in Kanniyakumari district were reportedly detained near the Diego Garcia island, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), on January 9, for allegedly crossing the maritime boundary.
- Diego Garcia, coral atoll, largest and southernmost member of the Chagos Archipelago, in the central Indian Ocean, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

## The Hindu- Culture(GSI)-Page 6

# Pilgrims throng Sabarimala temple to witness Makaravilakku today

**The Hindu Bureau**  
PATHANAMTHITTA

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) anticipates around 1.5 lakh pilgrims at the Sannidhanam for the Makaravilakku festival on Tuesday.

TDB president P.S. Prashanth said a final review of the arrangements for devotees was conducted on Monday.



**For a holy glimpse:** Pilgrims gather at the Sabarimala temple on Monday ahead of the Makaravilakku festival. LEJU KAMAL

### Cap on bookings

He said only 40,000 pilgrims would be allowed access to the hillock via the virtual queue system while spot bookings had been capped at 1,000

State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) buses from Nilackal to Pampa would be regulated starting 10 a.m. on Tuesday. En-

from Pampa would be prohibited after noon to allow the Thiruvabharanam (deity's jewellery) procession. Pilgrims arriving at Nilackal

ceed to Pampa only after 6 a.m. on January 15. To facilitate the return journey after Makaravilakku, 800 KSRTC buses had been arranged. Of these, 150 would operate shuttle services between Pampa and Nilackal.

The Thiruvabharanam procession from the Pandalam Palace will receive a ceremonial welcome at Saramkuthi before proceeding to the Sannidhanam.

The reception at the Sannidhanam will be led by Devaswom Minister V.N. Vasavan and Tamil Nadu Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, D.K. Saba-

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) anticipates around 1.5 lakh pilgrims at the Sannidhanam for the Makaravilakku festival

- Makaravilakku is an annual festival of great importance, held every year during Makar Sankranti in Kerala, India at the Sabarimala Temple

## The Hindu-Economy/Health-Page 11



### Rat-hole mining: why the practice continues in spite of its hazards

Laborers perish from Asphyxiation and suffocation, and others risk the hazards of rat-hole mining — asphyxiation because of poor ventilation, collapse of mines due to lack of structural support, and flooding — in some strikes or fire accidents as much as working in farms or construction sites.

**By Anand Kumar**

In January 2020, nine workers were trapped in a flooded coal mine in Assam's Dima Hasao district. Bodies of four of the workers were recovered, and another was still missing. In this article, dated November 29, 2023, Anand Kumar explains the dangers of rat-hole mining.

**The story so far**

A series of questions from the Supreme Court to the Union government resulted in a series of answers. Several major workers' unions recovered bodies of workers who died trapped in a flooded coal mine in Dima Hasao district in Assam. On January 14, 2020, the top court had asked whether rat-hole mines could possibly operate in the northeast hills without the "continuous" efforts. Three or four days later, the court had asked the government to

submit a report on the safety of such mines. It also asked the government to submit a report on the safety of such mines. It also asked the government to submit a report on the safety of such mines. It also asked the government to submit a report on the safety of such mines.

**Why is such mining banned?**

The government has been in control of the land in Meghalaya, a Sixth Schedule Area where the 1957 Mines Act, which bans rat-hole mining, does not apply. The landowners are also the owners of the minerals beneath. Coal mining began after Meghalaya retained statehood in January 1957. However, the term and expenses involved in opening an mine were a major employment-generating mechanism.

**What led to the NGT ban?**

The ban was imposed because of the hazards of rat-hole mining in Meghalaya for decades. It is a highly dangerous and highly

biological oxygen demand, at least two rivers, Jalki and Mphaka, because the people in control of the mine, the State, had to be the NGT because of the mining in the hills. In 2014, while the mining was still in progress, the number of cases of asphyxiation and suffocation was increasing. The mining was also causing the loss of lives. At least 12 workers were arrested in an illegal mine in the state. The NGT has also asked the government to submit a report on the safety of such mines.

**What is the way forward?**

The State's Department of Mining and Geology refused to submit a report to the NGT because of the mining in the hills. In 2014, while the mining was still in progress, the number of cases of asphyxiation and suffocation was increasing. The mining was also causing the loss of lives. At least 12 workers were arrested in an illegal mine in the state. The NGT has also asked the government to submit a report on the safety of such mines.

**The State has an estimated reserve of 200 million tonnes of coal, with high-quality coal belonging to the Eocene age (25-66 million years ago). The stakes for a massive coal boom have been so high that the State government has been unable to regulate the extraction of mining rights.**

In May 2023, Meghalaya Chief Minister

- nine workers were trapped in a flooded coal mine in Assam's Dima Hasao district, with four bodies recovered so far. This incident highlights the dangers of rat-hole mining, a hazardous method involving narrow tunnels for coal extraction. The Supreme Court raised concerns about illegal mining and official complicity in 2019. Rat-hole mining, banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2014, is dangerous due to risks like asphyxiation, collapses, and flooding. It also causes environmental damage, including land degradation and water contamination. Despite the ban, illegal mining continues, leading to fatalities.
- The NGT ban was influenced by reports of human rights abuses, including child labor, with about 70,000 children from Bangladesh and Nepal working in these mines. In response, the Meghalaya government has approved mining leases for 'scientific' mining, aimed at reducing environmental impact, though activists remain skeptical that this will address the core issues of profit-driven, unsafe mining practices.



## The Hindu-Environment-Page 20



A mass blooming of *Dipocarpis* plants on a sada.  
MANALI RANE

### *A Konkani secret, the flat-top sada is a freshwater paradise*

Manali Rane

The Konkani region located between the Arabian sea on one side and the Western Ghats on the other is well-known for its beaches and temples.

As one travels across the Western Ghats towards Ratnagiri district, the landscape slowly transitions from mountain ranges standing a thousand metres tall, with steep slopes, to rolling hills with flat tops locally called *sada*, meaning a large flat area. They are the result of centuries of erosion.

The *sada* are barren most of the year but become transformed during the monsoons. They are similar to the

- The Konkani region, flanked by the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, is renowned for its beaches and temples. As one travels towards the Ratnagiri district, the landscape transitions from towering mountain ranges to rolling hills with flat tops called *sada*. These areas, barren for most of the year, transform during the monsoons, becoming vibrant with unique endemic flora.
- The *sada*'s geology, with highly weathered lateritic soil, acts as a rainwater catchment, recharging groundwater. This provides villages with year-round access to fresh water through wells, springs, and streams, maintained as part of local rituals.

## Indian Express-S&T(GSIII)

### What is the Genome India project? Why does it matter?

ANONNA DUTT

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 13

THE DEPARTMENT of Biotechnology recently announced a new platform and framework for sharing its human genome dataset, sequenced under the Genome India project.

Comprising 10,000 genome sequences of healthy individuals from 99 ethnic populations in the country, this dataset has helped create a baseline map of India's genetic diversity. The second phase of the project will see researchers sequence genomes of people with specific diseases.

#### What is a genome? How are genomes sequenced?

Every individual inherits from their parents an instruction manual that decides how their body develops and functions – from their height and the colour of their hair, to the diseases they may inherit or are predisposed

to. This manual, known as the genome, is made of twisted paired strands of deoxyribonucleic acid, commonly known as DNA.

Each strand of DNA comprises four chemical units, or bases, denoted by the letters A, C, G, and T, just like the order of letters determines the meaning of a word, the order of these bases determines the meaning of the information encoded in the DNA. Various combinations of these bases – there are around three billion pairs in the complete human genome – thus determine the unique genetic makeup of each individual.

Sequencing simply refers to determining the exact order of the bases in a strand of DNA. To do this, researchers first extract genetic information from blood – virtually every single cell in the body contains a complete copy of one's genome. But handling the entire genome is difficult.

Researchers thus cut the genome up into smaller pieces, tag these pieces, and decode these smaller chunks of genetic material.

This information is then re-assembled using the tags to create a whole genome.

#### What is the Genome India project? Why is it important?

With some 4,600 distinct populations spread across the country, India is genetically very diverse. The Genome India project, approved in 2020, aims to capture this diversity. Researchers from 20 scientific institutions have come together to sequence 10,000 genomes under the project – the Department of Biotechnology aims to eventually sequence up to a million genomes.

This can be helpful in a number of ways. ■ It can help identify genetic basis or risk factors for various diseases, which can in turn be used to develop targeted therapies and diagnostic tests. Newer therapies for several diseases work by modifying, deleting, or adding certain genes, which makes it impor-

tant to first identify the genes that lead to certain diseases.

■ Of the 135 million genetic variations identified in the 10,000 genomes sequences so far, some seven million were not found in other global databases. A uniquely Indian dataset may thus help identify specific genetic variations found in Indian populations.

■ This may further help scientists identify the frequency at which certain genetic variations, which are known to cause disease, appear in the population, and thus recognise how common a disease might be. For example, the MYBPC3 mutation known to lead to cardiac arrest at a young age is found in 4.5% of the Indian population but is rare globally.

■ An Indian database can also help identify resistance-indicating variations – the genes (or lack thereof) that might make certain medicines or anaesthetics ineffective in certain populations. For instance, people belonging

to the Arya Vysya community of South India lack a certain gene that precludes them from properly processing common anaesthetics, which can even have fatal effects on them.

#### What will the second phase of the project entail? How will the data be shared?

The second phase will involve sequencing genomes of people with specific diseases. This will enable researchers to compare diseased genomes with healthy ones, and help them identify genes that cause or predispose a person to certain diseases. Researchers may also be able to study the genetic changes that occur when someone is afflicted with a certain disease.

The team is currently in discussion with experts to identify the diseases for which genomes should be sequenced, and the number of genomes that need to be sequenced for each disease to produce meaningful results. Among diseases most likely to be included

would be different types of cancers, chronic conditions such as diabetes, various neurological or neurodegenerative diseases, and certain rare diseases found in Indian populations.

The data produced by the project, however, will not be universally available for the time being. "We have to be very careful how we share this highly sensitive data. The data will only be available to research institutes that partner with us for the study," Dr Suchita Ninawe, senior scientist from the Department of Biotechnology, said.

To maintain the anonymity of the data, it will also be double blinded. Samples sequenced by a partner institute will be encoded before being uploaded to the central database, and then encoded once again when shared with researchers, Ninawe said.

Scientists wishing to utilise the data will have to respond to a call for proposals, and collaborate with the Department of Biotechnology. Their research will be funded by the government.

- The human genome is an instruction manual inherited from parents, determining traits and predisposition to diseases.
- It consists of 3 billion base pairs, made of A, C, G, and T.
- Sequencing involves extracting DNA, cutting it into smaller pieces, and using a sequencer to decode and assemble the genome.
- Genome India Project: Launched in 2020 to map India's genetic diversity, as the country has over 4,600 distinct populations.
- The first phase sequenced 10,000 genomes, and the goal is to expand to 1 million genomes.



# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## Air-Culture(GSI)

### Nation Celebrates Makar Sankranti Marking The End Of Winter



- Makar Sankranti, a festival of harvest, is celebrated today across India, marking the end of winter and the start of longer days.
- The festival is known by various names in different regions: Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Uttarayan in Gujarat, Bhogali Bihu in Assam, and Poush Sankranti in West Bengal.

# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## Air-IR(GSII)

### India Sends 2nd Tranche Of Foodgrain Assistance To Lesotho



India has sent the second tranche of foodgrain assistance for the people of Lesotho.

Geography :It is a country in Southern Africa.

It is a highland country with plateaus, hills, and mountains. Its highest point is Thabana Ntlenyana at 3,482 meters.

The capital: Maseru

History : Lesotho, initially inhabited by Khoisan hunter-gatherers, was later settled by Bantu and Sotho-Tswana peoples.

In 1822, King Moshoeshoe I unified the region, which became a British protectorate in 1843, known as Basutoland.

Lesotho gained independence on October 4, 1966, with King Moshoeshoe II as its first sovereign.

