

## Understanding inequality in India's growth story

**Prelims:** General Studies Paper - 1  
Current events of national and international importance

**Mains:** General Studies - 3  
Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

### 1. Context: Policy Changes and Rising Inequality Concerns

- Recent policy changes include the **new Labour Codes** and the **Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025**, replacing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**).
- These changes have raised concerns about the welfare of **informal workers** and **rural populations**.
- Official narratives increasingly suggest **inequality is less serious today**, despite concerns regarding **data comparability**.
- Inequality analysis depends on what is measured - **income, wealth, or consumption** - along with methodology and social categories such as **caste and class**.
- Estimates are based on the **Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES 2023-24)** conducted by **NSSO(National Sample Survey Organisation)**.

### 2. Major Findings on Consumption Inequality

- The estimated consumption expenditure **Gini Index is 0.29**, higher than the **World Bank estimate of 0.25**.

The **Gini Index** is a statistical measure used to assess the level of **income, wealth, or consumption inequality** in a society. It ranges from **0 to 1**, where **0 represents perfect equality** and **1 represents perfect inequality**.

- Urban India** is more unequal than **rural India**, especially in **non-food expenditure**.
- Urban non-food **MPCE(monthly per capita expenditure)** is about **1.5 times** the all-India average, while rural expenditure remains below average.
- In urban India, the **top 10%** account for **27% of total non-food expenditure**.
- The top urban decile's **MPCE** is **six times** that of the bottom urban decile and **nine times** that of the bottom rural decile.
- The **richest 5%** spend nearly **six times more** than the **poorest 5% in rural areas** and **nine times more** in urban areas.
- Between-decile inequality** contributes nearly **90% of non-food expenditure inequality** in urban India.

### 3. Structural and Class-Based Nature of Inequality

- NSS surveys** fail to adequately capture the **super-rich**, causing underestimation of inequality.
- Around **one-fourth of the richest 10%** benefited from the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)**, while **13%** possessed **BPL ration cards**.
- Inequality must also be studied through **caste, class, and occupational disparities**, not only income groups.
- Urban informal workers, small farmers, and agricultural labourers** have lagged behind, increasing **class inequality**.
- Welfare measures over the last decade have not significantly reversed these **structural trends**.

### 4. Implications and Way Forward

- A large section of Indians continues to depend on **debt-led consumption**.
- Urban-centric growth** and **agricultural distress** have widened the **rural-urban divide**.
- Policies assuming lower inequality may lead to **adverse welfare outcomes**.

- Inequality in India remains **multidimensional**, involving **class, caste, occupational, and spatial disparities**.
- Better inequality data, stronger rural livelihoods, and enhanced protection for **informal workers** are essential for **inclusive growth** and **equitable development**.

### Fixing structural deficits in India's health system

**Prelims:** General Studies Paper - 1  
Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

**Mains:** General Studies - 2  
Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

#### 1. Expansion of Medical Education

- In **2025-26**, India approved:
  - ➔ **43 new medical colleges**
  - ➔ **11,682 MBBS seats**
  - ➔ **8,967 postgraduate seats**
- Out of the 43 colleges:
  - ➔ **27 are private**
  - ➔ **8 are State government colleges**
  - ➔ **8 belong to the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) sector**
- **Private colleges** charge high fees and are **not obligated** to provide doctors for government service.
- Merely increasing seats and infrastructure does **not ensure availability of doctors** in rural or underserved areas.

#### 2. Major Problems in Public Health System

- India faces a severe shortage of **specialist doctors** in rural areas.
- In **5,491 Community Health Centres (CHCs)**:
  - ➔ Vacancy rate is **79.9%**
  - ➔ Only **4,413 specialists** are available against a need of **21,964**.

- Many specialists avoid rural service due to:
  - ➔ Lack of **equipment**
  - ➔ Poor **staff quarters**
  - ➔ Inadequate **schools for children**
  - ➔ Limited **peer medical support**.
- **11 out of 18 AIIMS** have around **40% faculty vacancies**, weakening specialist training and research.
- Many CHCs function only like **Primary Health Centres (PHCs)** because of staff shortages.

#### 3. Flaws in Government Policy and Budgeting

- Health budgets focus mainly on **infrastructure and buildings** rather than:
  - ➔ **Drugs**
  - ➔ **Diagnostics**
  - ➔ **Emergency care**
  - ➔ **Ambulance services**
  - ➔ **Staff salaries**.
- States continue building more CHCs mainly to **utilise central funds, despite shortage of specialists**.
- Specialist doctors are **divided among too many hospitals**, making **healthcare services less effective**.

#### 4. Suggested Solutions

- Classify PHCs and CHCs into:
  - ➔ **Normal**
  - ➔ **Difficult**
  - ➔ **Most difficult areas**.
- Provide incentives for doctors in remote areas:
  - ➔ Higher **financial allowances**
  - ➔ Better **staff housing**
  - ➔ Good **schooling facilities**
  - ➔ Priority in **postgraduate admissions**.
- Link all **government-sponsored postgraduate seats** with mandatory service in vacant CHCs or district hospitals.
- Introduce **service bonds** (e.g., 10-year rural service commitment).

- Follow an **“all or none”** principle:
  - ⊖ A CHC should receive **all five required specialists together** or none at all.
- Improve infrastructure in selected CHCs:
  - ⊖ **Operation theatres**
  - ⊖ **Labour rooms**
  - ⊖ **ICUs**
  - ⊖ **24-hour emergency units.**
- Proper staffing can improve:
  - ⊖ **Quality of government hospitals**
  - ⊖ **Patient satisfaction**
  - ⊖ **Doctor-patient relations.**

**Employees’ State Insurance Scheme** of India is a **multi-dimensional Social Security Scheme** tailored to provide **Socio-economic protection to the 'employees' in the organized sector** against the **events of sickness, maternity, disablement and death due to employment injury and to provide medical care to the insured employees and their families.**

### When does a CM cease to hold office?

**Prelims:** General Studies Paper - 1  
Current events of national and international importance

**Mains:** General Studies - 2  
Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

#### 1.Context

- Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee refused to resign as Chief Minister** after the party’s defeat in the West Bengal elections.
- She **alleged that the election outcome was the result of a “conspiracy” and not a genuine mandate of the people.**
- She stated that **the party would challenge the election results and continue its political struggle.**

#### 2.Can a Governor Remove a Chief Minister?

- Article 164(1) states that the Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor and Ministers hold office “during the pleasure of the Governor.”**
- On a literal reading, this appears to give the Governor the power to remove a Chief Minister.

- During the Constituent Assembly debates, **Mohammad Ismail Khan argued that a government should remain in office only as long as it enjoys the confidence of the State Legislative Assembly.**
- B. R. Ambedkar** clarified that in a parliamentary system, the **Council of Ministers can continue only while it has majority support in the Assembly.**
- The **Supreme Court of India has held that the Governor normally acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers**, meaning a Governor cannot arbitrarily remove a Chief Minister who still enjoys majority support.

#### 3.When is a Floor Test Required?

- A floor test is **conducted to check whether the Chief Minister enjoys majority support** in the Legislative Assembly.
- If the **Governor asks a Chief Minister to step down and invites another leader to form the government** while the Assembly is still functioning, a floor test becomes necessary.
- During the floor test, the Chief Minister must prove majority support in the House;** failure to do so requires resignation.
- If **no party or coalition is able to prove majority and form a stable government, President’s Rule** can be imposed under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.

#### 4.What Happens After the Assembly’s Tenure Ends?

- Article 172 of the Indian Constitution states that a State Legislative Assembly normally continues for five years** from its first meeting unless dissolved earlier.
- After five years, the **Assembly dissolves automatically.**
- The present West Bengal Assembly started on May 8, 2021.
- Its **tenure ends on May 7, according to the Election Commission of India.**
- Once the **Assembly’s term ends, the Governor must begin the process of forming a new Legislative Assembly** through elections.

#### 5.What Happens Next After the Assembly Election Defeat?

- **Resignation after defeat in an Assembly election** is considered mainly a constitutional convention.
- The **Chief Minister automatically ceases to hold office once the Assembly's tenure ends** and the House is dissolved.
- An **election petition can be filed before the Calcutta High Court within 45 days** of the declaration of results.
- Under the **Representation of the People Act, 1951**, an election may be declared void due to corrupt practices or procedural violations.
- **Large-scale deletion of voters can be challenged through a writ petition for violating fundamental rights** and electoral integrity.

## What is Karnataka's new gig worker grievance system?

**Prelims:** General Studies Paper - 1  
Current events of national and international importance

**Mains:** General Studies - 2  
Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### 1.Context

- On May 1, 2026 (International Workers' Day), **Karnataka launched a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for gig workers.**
- It is **claimed to be India's first government-backed grievance handling system for platform-based gig workers.**
- Gig workers can **officially file complaints through the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS).**
- IPGRS is a **centralised digital platform for addressing grievances** related to government schemes and services.

### 2.How does the system work?

- **Gig workers can file grievances on IPGRS regarding pay, working conditions,** and platform-related disputes involving aggregator platforms (such as Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato).

- Under the Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, every aggregator platform must form an Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (IDRC).
- Complaints filed through **IPGRS are automatically forwarded to the concerned platform's IDRC, which must try to resolve them within 15 working days** and issue a final order within 45 days.
- If dissatisfied with the decision, **parties can appeal to the Karnataka Gig Workers Welfare Board within 30 days.**

### 3.Concerns Raised by Gig Workers & Gap Addressed

- Gig workers **can complain about account suspension, deactivation, termination, or withheld payments.**
- Complaints **may also involve unfair penalties, discrimination, unsafe working conditions, and rights violations.**
- Earlier platform grievance systems lacked a formal dispute resolution mechanism.
- The new Karnataka system brings transparency and legal recourse for gig workers.
- The **government acts as a central facilitator and monitors the resolution process.**

### 4.Why is the Mechanism Being Implemented?

- The **Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025 was officially notified** in September 2025.
- In March 2026, **Karnataka became the first Indian State to notify Rules for implementing the gig workers' law.**
- The **grievance redressal mechanism is a key component of the Act.**
- It **aims to prevent arbitrary termination or account deactivation of gig workers** and address their grievances.

### 5.Other Key Developments Related to the Act

- Karnataka **formed the Platform-Based Gig Workers Welfare Development Board in January 2026.**
- **Platforms must share gig workers' details with the Board for integration** into its portal.

- **About 12 platforms have submitted data of nearly 12 lakh gig workers;** the introduction of unique IDs for gig workers will avoid duplication.
- Karnataka **introduced a 1% welfare fee on aggregator platform transactions** in February 2026.
- This **welfare fund will provide benefits such as insurance, medical aid, maternity support, and old-age protection** for gig workers.

## KEYWORDS

### Hantavirus

- Hantavirus is a **rodent-borne viral disease transmitted mainly through inhalation of particles from infected rodent urine, saliva, or droppings.**
- It can cause **two major illnesses: Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), affecting the lungs, and Haemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS), affecting the kidneys.**
- HPS is a **severe respiratory disease with a high fatality rate of nearly 40%.**
- HFRS can lead to low blood pressure, internal bleeding, and acute kidney failure.
- Symptoms usually **begin with fever, fatigue, and body aches, followed later by coughing, breathing difficulty, and fluid accumulation in the lungs.**
- There is **no specific cure or vaccine for hantavirus infection, and treatment mainly involves supportive medical care** such as rest, oxygen support, and fluids.

## Species in News

### Lantana camara (L. camara)



- Lantana camara is an **invasive alien shrub native to Central and South America.**
- It **spreads rapidly in forest ecosystems and suppresses native vegetation.**
- The species is **listed among the world's worst invasive species by the IUCN.**
- In India, it has heavily invaded protected areas such as the Western Ghats and central Indian forests.

### Prosopis juliflora (P. juliflora)



- Prosopis juliflora is a drought-resistant invasive tree introduced in India for afforestation and fuelwood.
- **Native to Central and South America, it thrives in arid and semi-arid regions.**
- It depletes groundwater and **reduces grazing land availability for pastoral communities.**
- The species is **widely found in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and parts of southern India.**
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### Senna spectabilis

- *Senna spectabilis* is an **invasive exotic tree species belonging to the legume family**.
- Native to tropical America, it was introduced in India as an ornamental plant.
- It has **aggressively spread in forest areas of the Western Ghats, especially in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- The species **threatens native biodiversity by forming dense monoculture patches**.
- **Kerala Forest Department proposed “Mission Senna” to eradicate invasive alien plants from forest regions**, especially in the Western Ghats and Wayanad landscapes.



### Places in News

#### Strait of Hormuz

- **Strait of Hormuz** is a **narrow waterway located between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula**, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Musandam Peninsula of Oman.
- The **Persian Gulf** lies to its west, while the **Gulf of Oman** and **Arabian Sea** lie to its east and southeast respectively.
- Iran lies along the northern coast of the strait, while the UAE lies along the southern coast.
- At its narrowest point, the strait is about 29 nautical miles (54 km) wide.
- Important islands in the **region include Qishm Island, Hormuz Island, and Hengam Island**.
- It is regarded as one **of the world’s most important maritime choke points due to its strategic energy trade significance**.
- **Nearly 25% of global oil trade and about 30% of the world’s liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments** pass through this strait.

