

IAS

THE



HINDU

ANALYSIS

Topics

1. Equality of treatment for PwD – Pg 8
2. The 8th CPC – a chance to reform pay commissions – Pg 8
3. Strategic stalemate – Pg 8
4. Long Overdue – Pg 8

→ GS II / GS III

→ GS II / GS III

→ GS II

→ GS III

Prelims :

1. Food prices push up retail inflation to 3.9% - Pg 1
2. Project Kusha – Pg 10
3. Govt waives duty on nuclear power equipments – Pg 13

PIB

1. BRICS agricultural cooperation
2. Varya, Indigenous AI video tool

Equality of treatment for Persons with Disabilities

Addressing the digital divide through the Digital India Mission, India has marched on towards becoming a global “best practice” model of a digital welfare state. Yet, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) remain largely excluded from this promise of universal outreach. Disability pensions, contrary to the very principles underlying disability rights, are determined not by the nature or extent of disability but by domicile, the discretionary decisions of State governments, and cumbersome bureaucratic processes. As a result, a vulnerable section of citizens continues to remain outside the ambit of a welfare architecture that otherwise prides itself on inclusivity and last-mile delivery.

An inadequate safety net

The 2011 Census recorded 2.68 crore PwDs. Today, accounting for population growth and changing disease profiles, their number is conservatively estimated at 4.5 crore-6 crore. Although the Supreme Court of India has recognised the right to live with dignity as a fundamental right and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides legal protection, disability benefits – especially pensions – remain fragmented, discretionary, and inadequate. As a result, the Indra Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme covers only a small fraction of PwDs, while pension amounts in most States range from just ₹300 to ₹500 a month, with a few offering ₹1,000-₹3,000.

India spends barely 0.02% of GDP on disability welfare including pensions. South Africa spends 0.12%-0.15% of GDP (six times more); Brazil 0.45%-0.50% (20 times more); OECD countries 2.2% (110 times more) and Australia 0.35%-0.40% (20 times more).

Beyond politics, sound economics demands the inclusion of PwDs. The World Bank and UNDP estimate that low- and middle-income countries lose 3%-7% of GDP when PwDs are excluded from education, employment, and social security. Disability income improves household stability, rural consumption, and labour participation. Studies show fiscal multipliers of 1.4-1.6, while the 2025 Pro Bono Economics report found that the socio-economic returns from disability pensions exceed their costs by nearly 48%. Far from being a welfare expense, disability pensions are an investment and an effective economic stimulus.

India must establish a Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR) to give effect to the state's constitutional obligation, under Article 41, to provide public assistance to persons with disabilities, and to operationalise Section 24 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which guarantees adequate



Sushil Kumar

Former Secretary, Government of India, and an Advocate in the Supreme Court and High Court

social security, including pension benefits. Such a measure would translate the promise of inclusive growth and “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” into reality by shifting disability pensions from a matter of charity and discretion to a matter of citizenship rights. While ensuring that no disabled person receives less than a minimum pension regardless of where they live, a MUDPFR would still allow States to provide additional top-ups.

This is not an unrealistic proposal. South Africa provides a national disability grant with uniform eligibility norms; Brazil's BPC guarantees a national minimum income; and Australia and New Zealand operate nationwide disability pension systems. Several developing countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, Thailand and Indonesia, also provide disability income support at the national level. International experience shows that centrally set standards promote uniformity, universality and portability.

A MUDPFR of ₹8,000 per month for 40 lakh beneficiaries would cost about ₹38,400 crore annually (0.08% of GDP), while ₹10,000 for 65 lakh beneficiaries would cost ₹78,000 crore. Even a pension of ₹15,000 per month would keep expenditure below 0.2% of GDP. Such spending is fiscally manageable when compared with allocations for food subsidies (₹2.05 lakh crore), rural development (₹1.80 lakh crore), tax concessions and revenue foregone (₹1.72 lakh crore), and infrastructure (₹11.11 lakh crore). Yet, disability pensions and inclusion continue to receive only a tiny fraction of public expenditure.

From fragmentation to integration

The current disability pension system, shared between the Ministry of Rural Development and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, leads to duplication, delays and diffused accountability. Countries that have faced similar challenges have addressed them through a single national authority – South Africa's SASSA, Australia's NDIA, Brazil's INSS and Ireland's Department of Social Protection. India too needs a National Disability Pension Authority to oversee eligibility norms, a national registry, portability, digital integration, grievance redress and State-wise performance monitoring – one standard, one system, one nation.

Implementing a robust disability pension system would strengthen India's bid for a UN Security Council seat by translating its commitments into action under Article 28 of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ILO Recommendation No. 202, SDG 13, and the G-20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, all of which endorse social protection as a cornerstone of inclusive development.

Combining pensions with employment

support can move persons with disabilities from mere survival to productive participation. A MUDPFR could also yield economic benefits. Countries such as Singapore, South Korea, South Africa and Brazil integrate disability pensions with employment and social security systems. India should similarly strengthen its fragmented Disability Employment Incentive Scheme. Models abroad include employer tax incentives in Nigeria, the U.K.'s Access to Work programme, and Australia's wage subsidies. Existing schemes such as PM-DAKSH, NAPS and State-level employer incentives provide a foundation for expansion.

Constitutional imperative

A MUDPFR would give effect to the Constitution's guarantees of equality, equal protection, dignity and the right to life. India has already standardised major welfare programmes – from food security and health care to PM-KISAN and pensions – and delivers benefits at scale through DBT and UPI. The capacity and technology exist. What is needed is the political will to prioritise dignity. Disability pensions remain one of the few entitlements determined by where a person lives. If dignity is a constitutional right, geography cannot decide the minimum support for survival.

More than an economic or administrative reform, a MUDPFR is a moral one. It affirms that persons with disabilities are rights-bearing citizens, not recipients of charity. By transforming the state from a benevolent provider into a constitutional guarantor, it strengthens dignity, inclusion and citizenship.

Should India continue with a system in which disability pensions vary according to State budgets, political priorities and bureaucratic complexities, leaving persons with disabilities vulnerable to hardship? Or should the Republic guarantee a minimum level of support for all? A Viksit Bharat cannot leave its most vulnerable citizens at the mercy of a postcode lottery. Federalism cannot be a justification for inequality.

A MUDPFR is the next logical step in India's welfare architecture, building on rights-based entitlements enabled by digital inclusion and DBT. It would humanise the state, uphold the dignity of persons with disabilities and strengthen the Republic.

Over the past 75 years, India has steadily expanded its welfare state in pursuit of social justice. With the necessary platforms and delivery systems now in place, the time has come to secure the foundation. The real question is whether India recognises dignity for persons with disabilities as a constitutional right and a collective obligation. That promise is long overdue, and a MUDPFR offers a way to fulfil it.

PwD

DBT

Art 41

Part IV

0.02% of GDP.

SA → 0.12 - 0.15%

Brazil → 0.45 - 0.5%

India must adopt a minimum universal disability pension floor rate

Context

- India spends only around **0.02% of GDP** on disability welfare, including pensions.
- This is substantially lower than international standards:
 - **South Africa:** 0.12%–0.15% of GDP.
 - **Brazil:** 0.45%–0.50% of GDP.
 - **OECD countries:** around 2.2%.
 - **Australia:** 0.35%–0.40%.

Present condition

4.5 crores

- According to the **2011 Census**, India had **2.68 crore PwDs**.
- Considering population growth and changing disease patterns, the number is now estimated at around **4.5 crore**.
- Although the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** provides legal protections, welfare benefits remain fragmented and insufficient.
- The **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)** covers only a small proportion of eligible beneficiaries.
- Pension amounts in most States remain extremely low:
 - Generally between **₹300 and ₹500 per month**.
 - Only a few States provide pensions above **₹1,000–₹3,000 per month**.

The concept

- **Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR)** to ensure a basic level of income security for all PwDs across India.

Cost Estimates

- Pension of **₹8,000 per month** for 40 lakh beneficiaries:
 - Annual cost: approximately **₹38,400 crore.**
 - Equivalent to only **0.08% of GDP.**
- If beneficiaries increase to **65 lakh:**
 - Cost: about **₹78,000 crore.**
- Even a pension of **₹15,000** per month would keep expenditure below **0.2% of GDP.**

1.4 - 1.6

[central allocation]

+
[states]

1.5

₹ 100 → ₹ 100
₹ 100 → ₹ 150

Economic Rationale

- According to estimates by the **World Bank** and **UNDP**:
 - Low- and middle-income countries lose **3-7% of GDP** when PwDs are excluded from education, employment and social security.
- Economic multiplier of **1.4-1.7**

↳ Minimum support → Boosts consumption

↳ Generate demand

↓
Growth

→ (Socio-economic access) ↑↑

Constitutional Mandate (Article 41)

Part IV

- **Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases**
 - The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.



International references

- **South Africa**

- Provides a nationally administered disability grant.
- Uniform eligibility criteria apply across the country.

- **Brazil**

- The **Benefício de Prestação Continuada (BPC)** guarantees a minimum income to eligible disabled persons.

- **Australia and New Zealand**

- Operate nationwide disability support systems ensuring portability and consistency.

- **Other Developing Countries**

- Kenya, Rwanda, Thailand and Indonesia also provide nationally coordinated disability income support.

Way Forward

Periodic Review

- Creation of a National Disability Pension Authority

↓
[effective disbursement
of welfare]

→ Supplemented by state level schemes

Practice Question (10 marks)

- 'The disabled are the human capital worth investing.' Elaborate the statement highlighting the need for disability pensions.

Intro → Data based; present scenarios
↳ 4-5cr.
→ Income support.

Body → 0.02%
Int'l comparison

Constitutional mandate (Art 41)

Economic multiplier.

Socio-Economic



The 8th CPC — a chance to reform pay commissions

As India moves toward the 8th Central Pay Commission (CPC), public discussion has largely centred on familiar themes – fitment factors, salary revisions and arrears. Yet, the larger question may not be how much compensation should increase, but whether the framework for determining public compensation remains coherent, equitable, and fiscally sustainable. This is not merely an administrative matter. The manner in which the state structures salaries, allowances and pensions reflects broader institutional priorities and influences public confidence in governance.

The framework deficit

Over the decades, Pay Commissions have become far more than wage-revision exercises. Their recommendations shape inter-service parity, long-term fiscal commitments and the institutional balance within the state. Yet, the process remains narrow, with a small, time-bound body tasked with evaluating a diverse ecosystem of civil, military and technical services, largely on the basis of representations from the services themselves. A key challenge is the absence of a common evaluative framework. Services operate under different structures, career trajectories and working conditions, but there is no universally accepted method for comparing risk, responsibility, technical complexity or career progression. As a result, the system often seeks parity without clearly defining its basis.

This challenge is most visible in questions of parity. Officers across services with very different career paths and responsibilities may, at certain stages, receive comparable compensation. The issue is not one of competition between services but institutional coherence. If parity is to be maintained, the principles governing it must be transparent, consistent and objectively justified.

The comparison between civilian services and the armed forces illustrates this complexity. Military careers follow a sharply pyramidal structure, with limited promotional opportunities



Prem Kumar Nair

Retired Indian Army officer (colonel) with an interest in governing architecture and systems

The 8th Central Pay Commission should reform compensation frameworks, not merely salaries

and earlier retirement. Civilian services generally offer broader avenues for advancement and longer careers. Aligning compensation across such different systems requires careful consideration of these structural differences.

Another significant trend is the reduction in experience required for senior administrative positions. While faster career progression may reflect changing governance needs, complex policy challenges still demand institutional memory and seasoned judgment. Efficiency is important, but it cannot fully substitute for experience. Questions also arise over allowances. While they are intended to compensate for hardship, remoteness or operational risk, there is no uniform and transparent framework for assessing such conditions across services. This can create disparities that are difficult to justify and may foster perceptions of inconsistency.

Non-Functional Upgradation (NFU) raises a related concern. By allowing financial advancement without a corresponding increase in responsibility, it weakens the link between role, accountability and compensation. Though introduced to address slower promotion avenues, the NFU continues to generate debate over equity and institutional rationale.

The pension challenge

Pensions add another layer of complexity. India currently operates multiple pension systems, including legacy defined-benefit schemes, contributory plans for newer entrants, and separate arrangements for elected representatives. According to the Reserve Bank of India's State Finances Report (2023), salaries, pensions and interest payments consume a large share of State expenditure, limiting fiscal space for development. As a result, concerns about sustainability and inter-generational equity are becoming increasingly important.

Taken together, these issues highlight the need for a more coherent approach to public compensation. At present, pay frameworks for the executive, legislature and judiciary evolve

through different processes. While constitutionally distinct, this fragmentation can create inconsistencies and reduce transparency in compensation decisions.

Public trust depends not only on fairness, but also on transparency and explainability.

A new compensation architecture

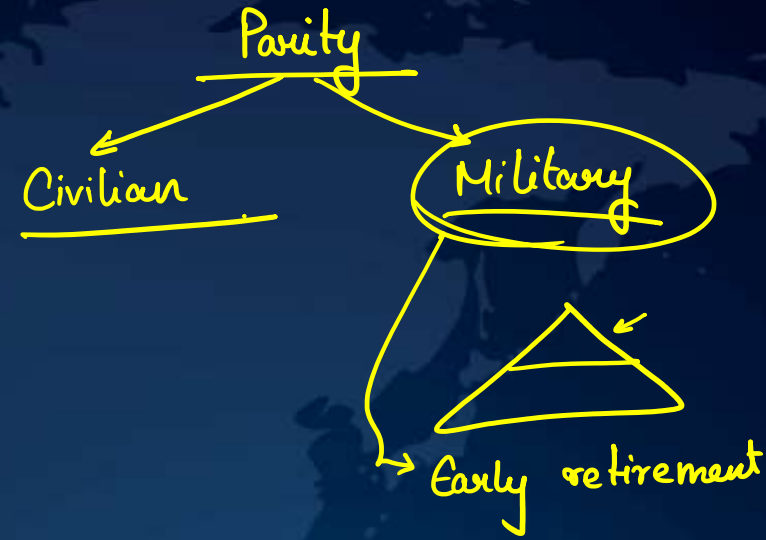
Many countries have gradually moved towards continuous and institutionalised mechanisms for reviewing public sector compensation. Independent authorities, clearly defined benchmarks and periodic review mechanisms have replaced infrequent, large-scale revisions. India's decadal Pay Commission model may therefore warrant reconsideration.

A more durable framework – whether a National Compensation Authority or a specialised public service body – could bring greater consistency to public sector pay. Rather than be a centralising authority, it could establish common principles for assessing responsibility, experience and hardship while preserving flexibility for different services and States.

Importantly, any such reform must respect India's federal structure. States should retain autonomy over implementation while operating within a broader framework of transparency, comparability and fiscal discipline. Greater coherence across branches of government, without affecting constitutional independence, would strengthen both credibility and public confidence.

Ultimately, public compensation is not simply about salaries and pensions. It is part of the larger relationship between the state and the citizen. In a democratic system, compensation structures must not only be financially sustainable, but also publicly explainable.

The 8th Pay Commission presents an opportunity to move beyond periodic revision and engage with these deeper structural questions. Whether that opportunity is utilised meaningfully may shape public trust in institutional governance for years to come.





Context

- As India prepares for the **8th Central Pay Commission (CPC)**, public discussions largely focus on:
 - Fitment factors,
 - Salary revisions,
 - Arrears and pension increases.
- However, the more important question is whether India's **public compensation framework** is:
 - Coherent,
 - Equitable,
 - Transparent,
 - Financially sustainable.

Parity

Indian Army ✓					Indian Air Force ✓					Indian Navy ✓						
LIEUTENANT	CAPTAIN	MAJOR	LIEUTENANT COLONEL	COLONEL	GROUP CAPTAIN	AIR COMMODORE	AIR VICE MARSHAL	AIR MARSHAL	AIR CHIEF MARSHAL	MARSHAL OF THE AIR FORCE	CAPTAIN	COMMODORE	REAR ADMIRAL	VICE ADMIRAL	ADMIRAL	ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET

Rare

Red arrows indicate the following correspondences: Indian Army Colonel to Indian Air Force Group Captain; Indian Army Brigadier to Indian Air Force Air Commodore; Indian Army Major General to Indian Air Force Air Vice Marshal; Indian Army Lieutenant General to Indian Air Force Air Marshal; Indian Army General to Indian Air Force Air Chief Marshal; Indian Army Field Marshal to Indian Air Force Marshal of the Air Force.

↓
Civilian

Military → Hardships.

→ Rare promotions

→ Early retirements

→ Lack of cross functional deployment

Way Forward

- Many countries have shifted from periodic pay commissions to:
 - Continuous review mechanisms,
 - Independent compensation authorities,
 - Clearly defined benchmarks.
- India could consider:
 - A **National Compensation Authority**, or
 - A specialised public-service pay body.
- Such an institution could:
 - Establish common principles for compensation,
 - Assess responsibility, experience and hardship objectively,
 - Ensure consistency across services,
 - Conduct periodic reviews instead of large decadal revisions.

Strategic stalemate

The U.S. should lift the blockade before asking Iran to open the Hormuz Strait

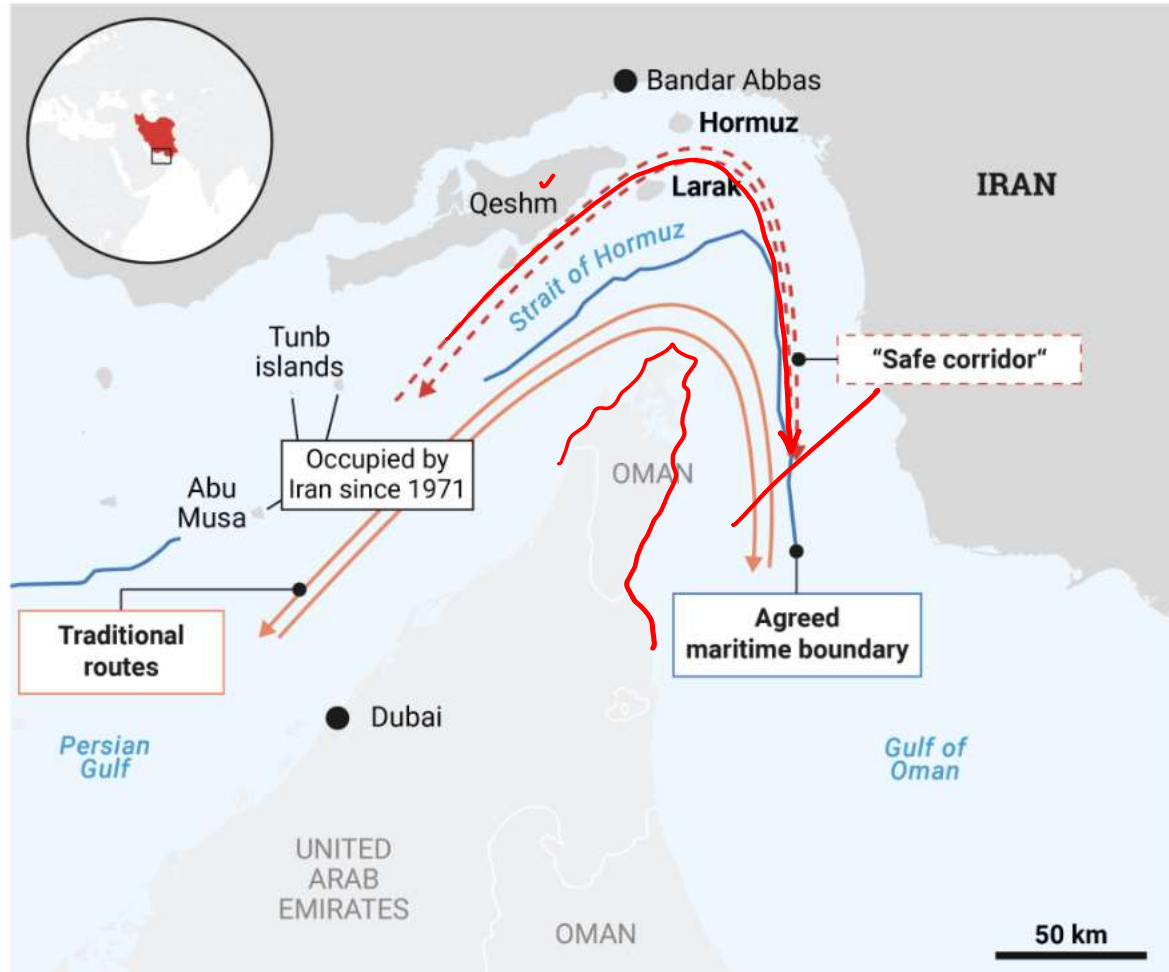
President Donald Trump's decision to back off from striking Iran, just hours after threatening to seize the country's Kharg Island, underscores the dilemma he faces in dealing with Tehran. Mr. Trump, who launched the conflict with his ally Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel on February 28, now wants to end it through talks. But Iran, which survived 40 days of U.S.-Israeli bombing and now controls the Strait of Hormuz, appears unwilling to hand him a diplomatic victory. Caught between an uncontrollable Israel, whose bombing of Lebanon threatens the fragile U.S.-Iran ceasefire, and an emboldened Iran that has become increasingly defiant and intransigent, Mr. Trump reverted to his familiar playbook of using military pressure to alter Tehran's negotiating position. On Wednesday he ordered strikes on Iran after confirming that a U.S. Apache helicopter had been shot down over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran retaliated by striking U.S. bases in Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan. After two nights of tit-for-tat strikes, Mr. Trump backed off on Thursday, claiming progress in talks. Over the past two months, he has claimed dozens of times that a deal with Iran was within reach. In the war's escalation cycle, Mr. Trump takes one step forward, two steps back.

When Mr. Trump despatched his "armada" to Iran's shores in February, he wanted to force Tehran into submission through military pressure. The U.S. and Israel had an ambitious list of demands, including dismantling Iran's nuclear programme, degrading its missile capabilities and ending its support for non-state militias. When the U.S. and Israel launched the war, they wanted regime change in Tehran. More than three months later, the war, which failed to achieve any of its declared objectives, has hardened Iran's positions. If Iran was willing to make concessions on its nuclear programme on February 27, it now insists that any discussion on the nuclear file can take place only after the U.S.-Israeli hostilities cease and the blockade is lifted. The war has fundamentally altered the strategic reality of the region. Yes, Iran has absorbed significant military and economic costs, but it has emerged strategically stronger by taking control of the Hormuz Strait and effectively trapping the U.S. in a costly stalemate. Rather than chasing a delusional Iranian surrender, Washington should adopt a phased, realistic diplomatic approach. The priority should be to enforce and extend the ceasefire in good faith and lift the blockade in exchange for Iran reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Once stability is restored, both sides can return to substantive talks on Iran's nuclear programme and work towards a durable end to the conflict.



Blockade of the Strait of Hormuz: Iran is selectively allowing ships to pass

Only selected ships are permitted to use the Iran-controlled "safe corridor" between the islands of Larak and Hormuz



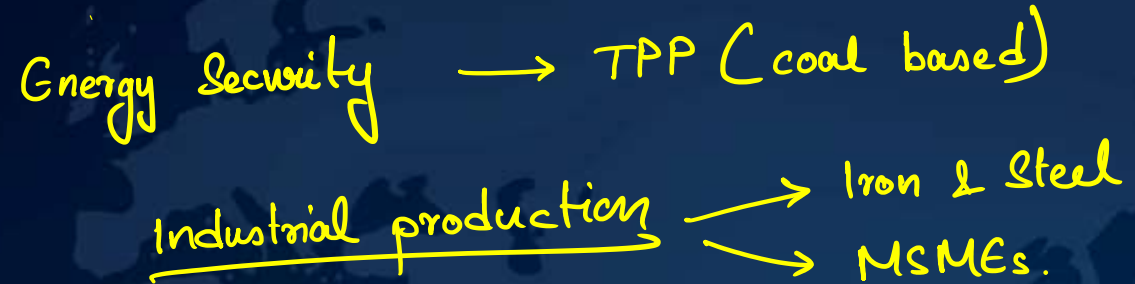
Long overdue

Coal exchanges can balance out energy scarcities across India

Unveiled at a time of record domestic coal production, the Coal Exchange Rules, 2026, are a case of better-late-than-never. They will create a broad market-based mechanism through regulated trading platforms for the lynchpin of India's energy system – coal. They are aimed at enhancing price discovery, transparency, access for small consumers, as well as, one would hope, reduce bilateral agreements that are often opaque and come with a whiff of graft, too often. Today, most coal transactions between producers and buyers take place through long-term contracts, primarily for the power sector, followed by auctions, imports and captive mining. While India's commodity exchanges are well established, they function largely as financial markets rather than physical delivery platforms. Coal exchanges, however, appear closer in design to power exchanges, which, despite modest volumes, play a role in price discovery, market signalling and the development of secondary markets. As if to prove this point, coal exchanges are expected to serve the non-regulated sector, which relies on Coal India auctions where coal is often sold at a premium to the highest bidder. Power exchanges are not merely niche trading platforms; they serve as points of reference for the broader power market. They have enhanced price discovery and served as a balancing market without replacing long-term power purchase agreements. Initially the power exchanges were only balancing shortages, but eventually the spot prices became a barometer of the broader power market indicating scarcity, surplus and system stresses for all electricity stakeholders. Perhaps the first role of coal exchanges could be to open up inventories, allowing surpluses to balance out shortages across India.

The templates for the two exchanges are not very different though the specific rules framed by the Coal Controller Organisation of India will determine the success of coal exchanges. Just as with the successes, the failures of power exchanges can also serve as lessons learned for coal. Coal is not as fungible as electricity, which once generated is the same everywhere requiring only minimum standards. Coal quality varies widely. Therefore, robust standards and quality assurance are as important as contract design, liquidity creation and enforcement. The latter set of requirements will ensure that major producers and consumers are drawn to the coal exchanges. The emphasis should be on facilitating participation of retail consumers unlike power exchanges, which are dominated by discoms. Coal India's stance will be crucial. Besides safeguards against volatility, dispute resolution mechanisms and improved transportation logistics will be important too; since the coal exchanges will be physical delivery platforms.

Coal Exchange Rules 2026.



Context



- The **Ministry of Coal** has notified the **Coal Exchange Rules, 2026**, creating the legal framework for establishing coal exchanges in India.
- This follows the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2025**, which introduced the concept of mineral exchanges.

Purpose

- The objective is to shift coal trading towards a **transparent, competitive and market-driven system** with improved price discovery and efficiency.
- Coal exchanges will function as **electronic trading platforms**, enabling buyers and sellers to trade coal through standardized contracts and transparent settlement mechanisms.
- The reform seeks to replace the traditional **one-to-many sales model** with a **many-to-many marketplace**, increasing competition among suppliers and consumers.



Dec 2025

Prelims

- The **Coal Controller Organisation (CCO)** has been designated as the regulator responsible for:
 - Registering coal exchanges, ✓
 - Supervising their operations, ✓
 - Ensuring compliance and transparency. ✓
- Eligible entities will be authorized to establish and operate coal exchanges, formulate market rules and facilitate trading. Registrations will remain valid for **25 years**.





Prelims

Inching higher

Combination of low base and cost pass-through from West Asia war into food and fuel increase retail inflation print



Food prices push up retail inflation to 3.9%

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Retail inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, increased to 3.9% as food prices rose in May, according to data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released on Friday. The inflation rate was 3.5% in April.

Retail prices moved at the fastest pace since January 2025, when the index increased 4.06%, and

touched 3.9% last month, making it the highest inflation number in 16 months.

The headline numbers had reduced since October 2024, when the inflation was over 6%. By October 2025, it had almost stagnated. From November 2025, retail inflation started rising due to the low base and now has come just 0.07% short of the RBI's target inflation rate of 4%.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Highlights

Retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index in May, 2026 is 3.93%

Year on year food inflation, based on Consumer Food Price Index, in May, 2026 is 4.78%

I. Key Statistics

A. National Level Indices

- Year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Price Index (CPI) with base year 2024 for the month of May, 2026 over May, 2025 is 3.93%(Provisional). Corresponding inflation rates for rural and urban are 4.25% and 3.53%, respectively.

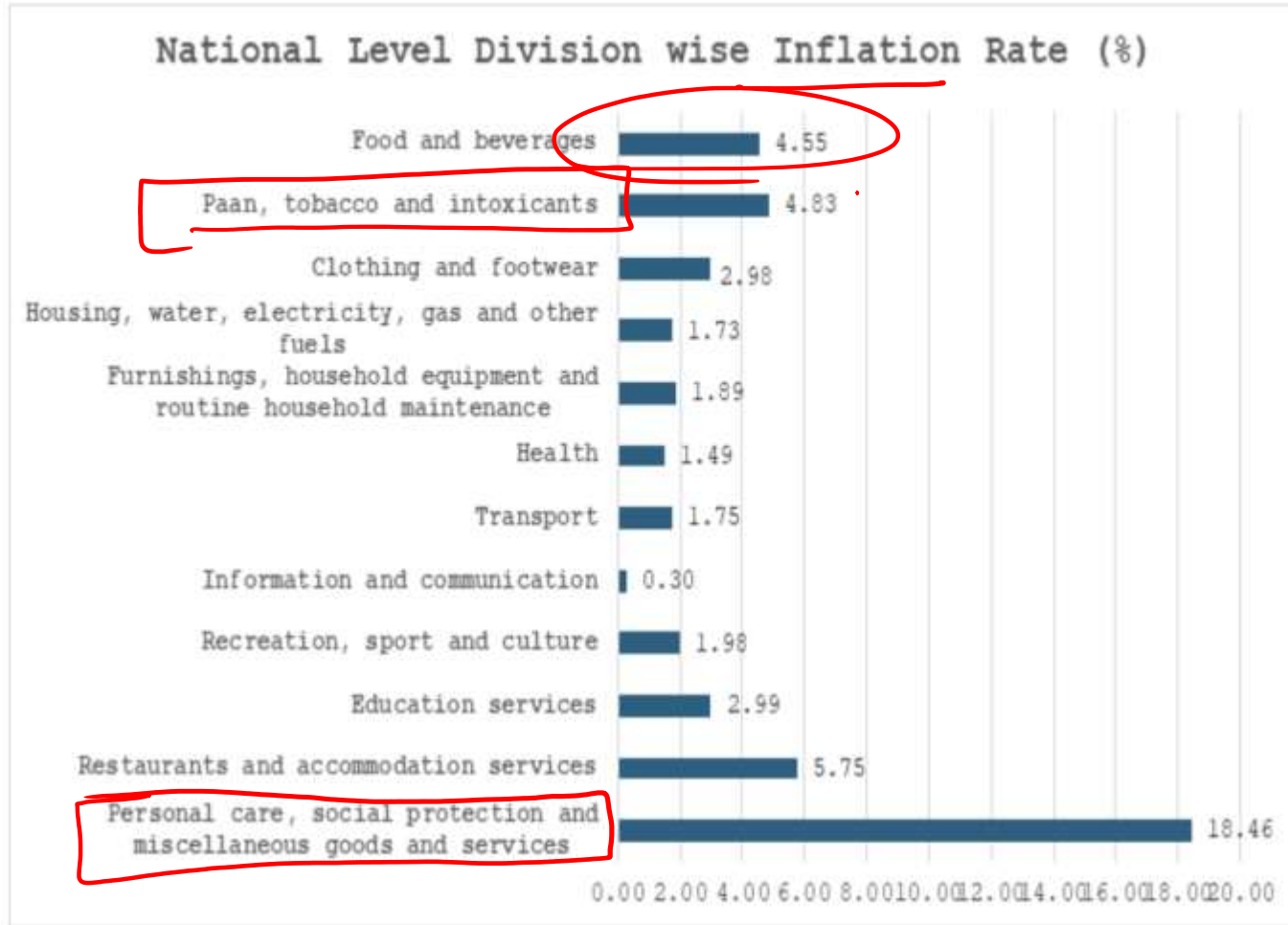
		May, 2026 (Provisional)			April, 2026 (Final)		
		Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
<u>Inflation (%)</u>	CPI (General)	4.25	3.53	3.93	3.74	3.16	3.48
	CFPI	4.85	4.66	4.78	4.26	4.10	4.20
Index	CPI (General)	106.11	105.66	105.91	105.28	104.92	105.12
	CFPI	105.07	105.83	105.35	104.17	104.77	104.39

- Food Inflation:** - Year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) for the month of May, 2026 over May, 2025 is 4.78% (Provisional). Corresponding inflation rates for rural and urban are 4.85% and 4.66%, respectively.



- **Housing Inflation:** - Year-on-year Housing inflation rate for the month of May, 2026 is 2.12% (Provisional) and the corresponding inflation rates for rural and urban are 2.73% and 1.91%, respectively.

- At National level, division wise inflation for the month of May, 2026 in the Combined sector may be seen from the graph below-



• Top 5 key items with low inflation at All India combined level in May, 2026 are given in table below:

S.No.	Item	Weight	Inflation (%) April, 2026	Inflation (%) May, 2026
1	Potato	0.7549	-23.66	-23.71
2	Peas	0.1254	-6.54	-11.47
3	Motor car and jeep	0.4665	-7.12	-7.19
4	Cumin (jeera)	0.3656	-5.03	-4.59
5	Motor cycle and scooter	0.6581	-3.61	-3.56

• Top 5 key items with high inflation at All India combined level in May, 2026 are given in table below:

S.No.	Item	Weight	Inflation (%) April, 2026	Inflation (%) May, 2026
1	Silver Jewellery	0.3127	144.36	155.23
2	Tomato	0.4961	35.26	48.43
3	Gold/Diamond/Platinum Jewellery	0.6230	40.74	40.93
4	Ginger	0.2556	14.36	32.49
5	Raisin (kisbmish) and monacca	0.1639	23.96	21.97

Project Kusha, our indigenous air defence shield, will be a game changer, says Rajnath

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday described the indigenous Project Kusha air defence programme as a “game changer” for India’s security architecture, asserting that its importance had already been demonstrated during Operation Sindoor.

Addressing scientists and officials in Hyderabad, after inaugurating the Advanced Weapon System Complex at the Defence Research and Development Organisation’s (DRDO) Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL) in the Dr. A.P.J.

Abdul Kalam Missile Complex, Mr. Singh said India’s indigenous air defence capabilities had successfully thwarted enemy intentions during the operation.

“Today I predict that Project Kusha will be a game changer for India’s security scenario. It is a world-class indigenous air defence system. Just as the Govardhan hill protected the entire region of Braj in the *Dvapara Yuga*, our air defence system provided a protective umbrella during that period (Operation Sindoor),” he said.

Project Kusha is a long-range air defence missile system being developed by the DRDO to provide a



Rajnath Singh

comprehensive shield against a wide range of aerial threats.

The Defence Minister praised the DRDO’s Missile Systems and Strategic Systems cluster for strengthening India’s technological excellence, strategic

autonomy and national security.

He said indigenous systems such as Akash and BrahMos had proved India’s capability to compete in the global defence technology ecosystem.

Changing warfare

Highlighting the changing nature of warfare, Mr. Singh said emerging technologies such as precision-strike systems, integrated air defence networks, hypersonic weapons, autonomous platforms, artificial intelligence and electronic warfare were reshaping modern battlefields. In this environment, he stressed the need for both resi-

lience and deterrence.

Referring to the government’s ambitious “Mission Sudarshan Chakra”, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address in 2025, Mr. Singh said the initiative would establish a multi-layered missile defence shield capable of protecting military assets, critical infrastructure and civilian establishments across the country.

“The system will provide robust protection while ensuring citizens face minimal inconvenience. It will also possess the capability to deliver a decisive response whenever required,” he said.

ANCA

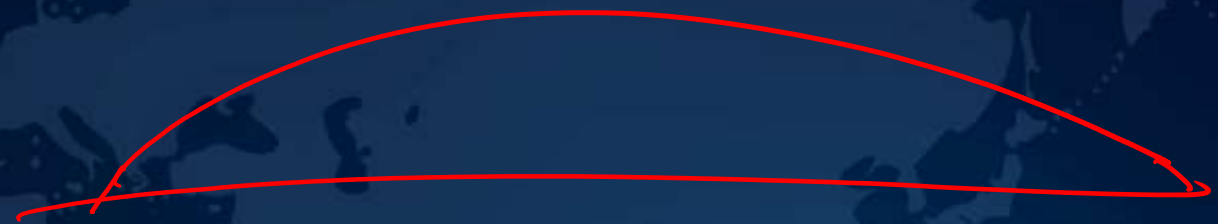
Raksha Mantri inaugurates an Advanced Weapon System Complex at DRDL, Hyderabad

Exceptional performance of indigenous missile systems during Op Sindoor is testimony to the growing strength of our defence R&D ecosystem: Shri Rajnath Singh

“Mission Sudarshan Chakra' will be a multi-level missile defence system of modern India”

“Resilience & deterrence key to safeguarding national security interests”

“DRDO must continue to address present-day challenges while working on futuristic tech to provide India a strategic advantage”



PROJECT KHUSHA IDRW.ORG	M1 Interceptor Dual-Pulse Motor Active Seeker Comm-Nav Imnbuty High Lethality Warhead	M2 Interceptor Dual-Pulse Motor+ Booster Seeker	M3 Interceptor Dual-Pulse Motor+ Bigger Booster Seeker



Govt. waives duty on nuclear power equipment imports

In what could serve as a major boost to India's nuclear energy ambitions, the Finance Ministry in an order on Thursday, waived customs duty on specific imports required for spurring generation of nuclear energy. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced extending the basic customs duty exemption on imports necessary for nuclear power projects up to 2035. The latest order takes retrospective effect, extending relief to imports made between April 1, 2019 and January 31 this year.



PIB



New resolve for BRICS agricultural cooperation from Indore: Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan addresses inaugural session

India emphasises global partnership under PM Modi's leadership and the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam': Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

India is focused on empowering small farmers: Union Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Agricultural sector records 4.5 per cent annual growth, food production reaches 376 million tones : Shri Chouhan

Women and youth power key drivers of agricultural transformation : Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Natural farming and technology to shape future preparedness : Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Posted On: 12 JUN 2026 2:38PM by PIB Delhi

Highlighting India's agricultural achievements, Shri Chouhan said the country's agriculture sector had registered an average annual growth of nearly 4.5 per cent over the last decade. He informed delegates that India's total foodgrain production has now reached nearly 376 million tonnes (MT), reflecting sustained growth in the sector. Wheat production in the country has reached close to 118 million tonnes, while horticulture production has crossed 378 million tonnes. Fish production has also increased significantly and has now exceeded 19 million tonnes, demonstrating broad-based growth across multiple agricultural and allied sectors.



Ministry of Electronics & IT



India AI Mission launches Indigenous Varya, a Video Story Generating AI Model Claiming to Offer Quality at Affordable Price

Developed by Avtaar.ai under the support from AI Mission, Varya Claims to cut Video Generation Time from 50 Steps to 4 Making it, Ten Times Efficient Over Leading Models

Education to E-Commerce, Varya Brings Affordable AI Video Generation Service to India at Population Scale & Offers Immense Potential to Convert Text into Videos by Smart Prompting

Posted On: 12 JUN 2026 3:09PM by PIB Delhi

Varya has been designed for India's many contexts, not a generalized idea of India. The model has been built to understand and generate culturally rich visual outputs across **India's regions, festivals, communities, food, clothing, public spaces and everyday life**. From a teacher creating a visual lesson in a village classroom, to an MSME creating product ads, to a citizen accessing public information through video, Varya aims to turn a simple idea into a moving story.

Avataar was among the companies selected by the **IndiaAI Mission** to build indigenous foundation AI capabilities. Access to subsidized national AI compute infrastructure enabled the research that led to **Varya**, highlighting how public AI infrastructure can accelerate homegrown innovation.

Developed with support from the **IndiaAI Mission**, Varya uses a **distillation technique** that **reduces video generation from 50 steps to 4 steps**, while maintaining comparable output quality. According to Avataar's internal inference-cost benchmarks, **Varya can generate video at ₹0.48 per second, making it upto 10x more cost-efficient** than several leading global video models.

The product experience is designed around a simple promise: **Idea → Video → Story**. Users can type an idea, upload an image, generate a video, and continue the story through additional clips. One prompt can become a lesson, an ad, a guide, a film or a memory.

For India, where AI must work not just for millions but for more than a billion people, efficiency is not a technical detail. It is the foundation for inclusion.

About Avataar

Avataar is an AI-native transformation company building domain-specialized AI products that help enterprises drive efficiency, unlock new operating models and build defensible IP-led capabilities. The company is focused on applying AI to real-world business and consumer use cases across high-growth markets.

What is Distilled Video Generation

Distilled video generation is a model compression technique from machine learning where a compact "student" model replicates the outputs of a larger, slower "teacher" model transferring capabilities while eliminating redundant computation. Standard video models iterate through over 50 noisy steps before producing clean output; distillation teaches the student to skip most steps and deliver the same quality in just a few iterations. Varya applies this breakthrough to video for the first time in India making frontier-quality video generation affordable, fast and accessible at population scale.

Teacher

student

