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A 100-year journey as the guardian of meritocracy

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) marks a century of its establishment on October 1. Envisioned by the nation's founders as a guardian of meritocracy, the UPSC has played a pivotal role in the recruitment, the promotion and the disciplining of officials of the Central Civil Services. Its journey over the past 100 years is not just an institutional history but also a testament to India's enduring faith in fairness, trust and integrity in governance.

The idea of an independent commission to recruit higher civil servants took root well before Independence. The Government of India Act, 1919, first provided for such a body, and in October 1926, the Public Service Commission was set up, following the recommendations of the Lee Commission (1924) which observed, "Wherever democratic institutions exist, experience has shown that to secure an efficient civil service it is essential to protect it as far as possible from political or personal influences and give it that position of stability and security which is vital to its successful working as the impartial and efficient instrument by which Governments, of whatever political complexion may give effect to their policies."

Headed by Sir Ross Barker, it began with limited powers, as an experiment under colonial rule. The Government of India Act, 1935 elevated it to the Federal Public Service Commission, giving Indians a greater role in administration. With the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, it assumed its present status as the UPSC. From conducting a handful of examinations in its early years, the UPSC has grown into a premier institution overseeing recruitment for diverse services ranging from the civil services to engineering, forest, medical, and statistical cadres. Its scope has expanded with the Republic, yet its mandate remains unchanged – to select the finest talent for public service.

The foundation and pillars

If the history of the UPSC is its foundation, the principles of trust, integrity and fairness are its pillars. Over the decades, millions of aspirants have placed their faith in the Commission, assured that success or failure depends solely on merit. This trust is no accident. It has been built painstakingly through transparency in procedure, impartiality in evaluation, and an uncompromising stance against malpractice.

Integrity, meanwhile, has meant protecting the institution from political or external pressures, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that those who succeed are genuinely among the most competent. Fairness has also meant providing equal opportunity to candidates from every background, urban or rural, privileged or underprivileged, fluent in English or not. In a country as diverse as India, where inequalities persist, the fact that the UPSC examinations are



Ajay Kumar
is Chairman, Union
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Commission (UPSC)

Over the decades, millions of aspirants have reposed faith and confidence in the Union Public Service Commission, assured that success is based on merit alone

regarded as a true "level playing field" is itself one of independent India's proudest achievements.

This philosophy finds echo in the timeless wisdom of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where what Lord Krishna says, "*Tasmadsakt statam karyam karma Samachar. Asakto haracharkarm paramapnoti purushah*" can be translated as "... without attachment, constantly perform your duty as it ought to be done".

The UPSC embodies this principle: it performs its duty with rigour and fairness, without attachment to outcomes.

The 'Indian Dream', the complexities

At the heart of the UPSC's recruitment journey are the thousands of aspiring youngsters who come forward year after year, driven by dedication, perseverance and a dream to serve the nation. Once dominated by a select few from elite urban centres, today, the civil services examination attracts candidates from nearly every district of India, including the remotest and most underprivileged regions. This extraordinary diversity reflects the true spirit of the 'Indian Dream' – the aspiration that talent, hard work and commitment can open the doors of opportunity to all.

The UPSC salutes these courageous aspirants and remains committed to reaching every corner of the country, ensuring that every aspiring citizen has the chance to contribute to the nation's service and progress.

The UPSC takes immense pride in conducting the world's biggest and most sophisticated competitive examination, the civil service examination, with remarkable precision and consistency year after year. Starting with nearly between 10 lakh to 12 lakh applicants for the preliminary examination, candidates for the mains examination have the option of choosing from among 48 subjects and writing their answers in English or any of the 22 languages recognised under the Constitution of India. The UPSC then evaluates these multiple-subject candidates into a single merit-based ranking – a feat that is unique in its scale and sophistication anywhere in the world. The logistics of the civil services examinations are truly extraordinary.

The preliminary examination is held across more than 2,500 venues nationwide. For the mains examination, the task becomes an intricate challenge in ensuring that each candidate at different centres across the country receives the question paper for the subject they have chosen.

This complexity is further compounded by the special arrangements made for differently-abled candidates. After the examination, answer sheets are evaluated anonymously by top experts in the 48 disciplines, with proficiency in the language in which the answers are written. All of this is completed within a defined timeline, without disruption, even during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This seamless, time-bound orchestration typifies the UPSC – its ability to manage complexity and diversity with efficiency, fairness, and equity.

As we celebrate a century of the UPSC, it is equally fitting to honour the unsung heroes behind its remarkable success – the paper-setters and evaluators who form the faceless backbone of the Commission. These are some of the finest academics and experts in the country, each a master in their own discipline. Yet they serve with quiet dedication, without seeking recognition or the limelight. This writer thanks every one of them for their selfless service, which ensures that the dreams and the aspirations of thousands of candidates are judged with fairness, rigour and integrity.

Across decades, the UPSC has given the nation civil servants who have administered during crises, managed the economy through reforms, overseen infrastructure and environmental challenges, and contributed in countless invisible ways to nation-building. Their work touches every Indian, even if the hand behind the service remains unseen.

A series of reforms

As the UPSC enters its centenary year, this moment calls not just for celebration but also for reflection. As India marches toward reclaiming old glory as a leading light of the world, the challenges emanating from global competition and technology advancements are disrupting existing models of governance. As an institution, the UPSC will continuously strive and adapt to these changes to remain current.

As a part of this, the UPSC has already initiated many reforms. The UPSC has a new online application portal for greater ease of application and new face-recognition technology to ensure zero impersonation. Its reforms with examination and recruitment processes are in line with the changing needs of time. The UPSC's Professional Resource And Talent Integration Bridge for Hiring Aspirants (PRATIBHA) Setu initiative, is facilitating employment opportunities for those who reach the interview stage but are unable to make it in the final list. PRATIBHA Setu has already helped many. Going forward, the UPSC proposes to use digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence, for its efficient and effective working, without compromising on the integrity of the processes and practices.

As Chairman, along with my fellow members of the Commission, celebrating the centenary year at the UPSC, we are humbled and inspired by the strength of our legacy and the faith reposed in the institution by the society at large.

We reaffirm our resolve to uphold and carry forward this gold standard of integrity, fairness and excellence, ensuring that the UPSC continues to serve the nation with the same trust and distinction in the years to come.



Labour of care

Women who facilitate rural health care should get better wages

For decades, the women who serve as Ashakalin Sri Parichars (ASPs) in Maharashtra have been performing some of the hardest, yet least acknowledged, labour in the rural health system. For a wide breadth of responsibility, their monthly wage has stagnated at ₹2,000 since 2016, decades behind inflation. They also lack job security, pensions, safety gear and travel allowance. In 2023, a labour court in Nagpur acknowledged that they deserved at least the protection of the Minimum Wages Act but left the decision to the State. In keeping with its verbal-only assurances, the State has even now only promised them ₹6,000 a month by December 2025 – much less than what multi-purpose health workers receive. The indifference is not accidental: ASPs, who predate Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and anganwadi workers, have been easy to ignore because they are poor, rural women. Their neglect reveals a gendered and caste-infected hierarchy of labour within public health, where skilled work is low status and devalued because of who performs it. Their ongoing protests are part of an arc of agitation following similar sit-ins in Kolhapur, Nagpur, Ratnagiri and Yavatmal. In this regard, their plight resonates with that of ASHAs in other States. ASHAs, created under the National Rural Health Mission in 2005, are the community's first link to the health system and are also officially classified as "volunteers" rather than employees, compensated only through off-delayed incentives, amounting to less than subsistence. Across States, ASHAs have repeatedly agitated for fixed honoraria, recognition as government staff and social security, and, like the ASPs' protests, have borne the same refrain: States cannot continue to build their health systems on the underpaid labour of women. These struggles highlight a structural contradiction. While India relies heavily on women community health workers and attendants to deliver maternal and child health care, immunisation and disease surveillance, especially in rural areas, it refuses to recognise them as workers entitled to minimum benefits and dignity. The reliance is often framed as offering rural women "opportunities" for public service. Yet, in practice, it is exploitation. These women risk snakebite while clearing hospital grounds and death in accidents en route to vaccination duty without insurance or compensation. A health system that does not value the people who keep it functional and link its margins to formal care is bound to sabotage itself. To secure rural health is to secure the rights of those women through living wages, safe working conditions and stable employment.

Swim to safety

Engagement with fishers can help with marine conservation

Once widespread across the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, the Gulf of Kutch and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India's dugongs dwindled to a few hundred individuals as poaching, by-catch, habitat loss and pollution compounded the animals' slow rate of reproduction. But, in the last decade, a series of initiatives have signalled a serious, if still inchoate, effort to reverse this decline. The most visible step was the notification of the Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay in 2022 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act. Protecting over 12,000 hectares of seagrass meadows, it has become a model of integrated marine conservation. Tamil Nadu's stewardship, bolstered by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and local community participation, has mitigated poaching and encouraged fishers to release dugongs caught as by-catch. Now, the International Union for Conservation of Nature has recognised the reserve as an exemplar, lauding its ecological significance and innovative restoration techniques. WII surveys suggest that the population here numbers over 200, fragile but encouraging progress from the fear of extinction voiced two decades ago. India has also experimented with technologies that widen conservation options, which include drone platforms and acoustic and satellite-based mapping of seagrass beds.

Yet, much remains to be done. Even in the reserve, mechanised fishing, port construction, dredging and pollution from agriculture and industry threaten seagrass meadows. Dugongs continue to die in fishing nets. Rising sea temperatures, acidification and storms threaten restoration gains. Populations in Gujarat and the Andamans are also smaller and less protected than in Tamil Nadu. Experts have stressed the importance of cross-border collaboration, particularly with Sri Lanka, since dugongs traverse the narrow Palk Strait. Without shared protection, the recovery will remain local. Funding, too, has been inconsistent: while allocations from the compensatory afforestation fund have helped, the long gestation of dugong populations requires decades of steady investment. These efforts and shortcomings hold broader lessons for the conservation of other marine species that demand intact ecosystems while being directly threatened by human activity. The Palk Bay reserve demonstrates that community engagement with fishers as partners can mitigate by-catch and create local constituencies for conservation. The IUCN recognition underscores how international endorsement can amplify domestic efforts, offering legitimacy and opportunities for knowledge exchange. Likewise, blending traditional ecological knowledge with technologies such as drones and echosounders shows how conservation can bridge tradition with modernity.



UPSC PYQ 2015

Q. With reference to ‘dugong’, a mammal found in India, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is a herbivorous marine animal.
2. It is found along the entire coast of India.
3. It is given legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Reclaim the district as a democratic commons

Across the world, public life feels increasingly fragmented and polarised, even as technological, ecological, and demographic upheavals gather pace. India's greatest opportunity – and challenge – in this moment lies with its youth. With 65% of the population under the age of 35 years, an aging global population, and profound changes in the nature of work, the question before us is stark. Can India's leaders ensure that our young people are mainstreamed economically and democratically?

Doing so will require shifting our gaze from metropolitan hubs to the districts where most Indians live. Nearly 85% of Indians remain in the district of their birth, yet cities that cover just 3% of the country's land account for over 60% of GDP. This concentration of growth, both social and geographic, has left much of the nation's talent under-utilised. Even as corporate profits have risen to record highs, wages have stagnated. That has dampened domestic consumption – the main pillar of the Indian economy – because purchasing power remains concentrated among a narrow segment. In a global order marked by volatility, India's next wave of growth cannot rely on exports or elite consumption alone. While governments have tried to put more money in people's hands, mass youth opportunity needs broad-based participation in production, consumption and innovation.

The problem is centralisation

Such participation cannot be engineered only from above. A central problem with India's governance is its deep centralisation. Successive policy paradigms have prioritised administrative efficiency, technocratic schemes and digital service delivery. These are all important. But their top-down nature has narrowed political agency at the local level. Elected representatives, meant to act as conduits between citizen aspirations and state capacity, have been reduced to mediators of individual entitlements rather



Ruchi Gupta

is the Executive Director of the Future of India Foundation, and leads YouthPOWER, India's first and only district-level youth opportunity and accountability platform

It is a crucial step to revive national development and the fundamental principles of democratic engagement

than shapers of developmental direction and conveners of public good.

This model is showing strain. Electoral politics has increasingly pivoted to welfare through cash transfers in the absence of meaningful employment. But this approach is yielding diminishing returns as promises multiply while structural transformation remains elusive.

Beneath the surface, there is growing political fatigue, among citizens and representatives, with a system that is struggling to deliver opportunity and ownership. This fatigue is most evident among young people, for whom the promise of mobility collides with the reality of limited opportunity.

Re-engaging youth, creating opportunity

To truly transform India, we must start from where Indian youth actually live – its districts. Administratively, India has long been district-led but this dominance of bureaucracy means that citizens experience the state primarily as subjects of delivery, not civic participants. To re-engage our youth and create opportunity, we must reclaim the district as a democratic commons rather than just an administrative unit.

If districts were placed at the centre of our civic imagination, opaque national schemes could be disaggregated, silos broken, and outcomes tracked locally. This would make accountability tangible, showing where districts are creating opportunity for youth and where course correction is needed. It would also bring into focus the stark disparities in investment, opportunity and outcomes across districts, enabling more equitable allocation of resources.

This vision builds on India's democratic structure. Districts already anchor administration, and Members of Parliament (MP) chair committees overseeing central schemes. Linking outcomes more directly to MPs' constituencies would bring governance closer to the people, incentivise locally tailored solutions and deepen civic engagement. Measurement and

accountability cannot by themselves overcome deficits of capacity or political will, but they can clarify problems, surface local innovations and create transparency. Done well, they can build a constituency for reform by connecting elected representatives, civil society and private actors around shared developmental priorities.

Shared responsibility for inclusive growth

This transformation also demands visible and meaningful participation from India's top 10% – political leaders, corporate executives and intellectuals. While many profess a commitment to inclusion, translating principle into practice requires specific and targeted interventions.

A district-first civic framework provides a way to do just that. It offers a tangible route for elites to translate good intentions into local action. It reclaims governance as a deeply democratic, grounded process: redistributing power to communities, fostering collective accountability, and bridging the persistent gap between policy design and lived impact. India's future will not be determined only by economic indicators, but by whether its democracy is responsive to the needs of youth outside urban and elite centres. We already have a district-first bureaucracy. What we need now is a district-first democracy. A district-first approach offers a framework to rebuild that engagement – by reconnecting local political leadership with development outcomes, and placing districts at the heart of democratic participation and economic progress. Most importantly, this framework of local collaboration offers a chance to build tangible common ground that is rooted in a shared love for the country, rather than being drawn into performative or polarising partisanship.

By focusing on India's districts, we can revive both national development and the fundamental principles of democratic engagement. If we fail to reimagine districts as democratic spaces, we risk not only wasting our demographic dividend but also hollowing out democracy itself.



The transformation of girls' education

In a country where the phrase “*Beti padhegi toh kya karegi?* (What will a daughter do if she studies?)” once echoed through homes and villages, India has undergone a powerful transformation in girls’ education over the past decade.

At a *Mahila Sammelan* (Women’s Conference) in Dwarka, Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked a group of women how many had studied beyond class 5. To his surprise, most of the elderly women raised their hands, while few younger women did. When asked why, they pointed to the era of the Gaekwad dynasty (1721-1947), when fathers were penalised for not educating their daughters. Today, however, many women are literate, while their daughters-in-law are not.

This anecdote underscores a larger truth: good intentions must be backed by accountability, leadership, and policy. And under Mr. Modi’s leadership, India is witnessing just that – a systemic push to change not just rules, but mindsets. This transformation is not just about more girls in classrooms; it’s about shifting the very foundations of Indian society, its health, economy, and demography, by empowering its daughters with the most effective tool of change: education.

The Gujarat model

As Chief Minister of Gujarat, Mr. Modi recognised that tackling issues such as female foeticide and girls’ illiteracy required a multi-pronged approach. Laws alone wouldn’t suffice; a fundamental shift in public perception, supported by infrastructure and incentives, was required. Launched in 2003, the Kanya Kelavani campaign became a key vehicle for this change. The initiative promoted awareness about girls’ education while addressing barriers such as the lack of separate toilets for girls in schools, a major cause of dropouts during adolescence.

The results were significant. Female literacy rate in Gujarat



Shamika Ravi

Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, and Secretary to Government of India. Views are personal

The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative has shown significant results in the last decade

which was lower than the national average, increased to 70%, higher than the national average of 64%. The school dropout rate reduced by as much as 90% among female students in targeted districts.

Mr. Modi transformed the policy initiative through widespread public support, by personally auctioning gifts received at public events, raising ₹19 crore for girls’ education. He also made a personal contribution of ₹21 lakh. These efforts sent a strong signal: girls’ education wasn’t just a government scheme, it was a public movement.

Scaling success nationwide

Inspired by Gujarat’s success, the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative was launched nationwide in 2015. Its aim was twofold: to prevent female foeticide and promote girls’ education. The initiative focused on 100 gender-critical districts in its initial phase and later expanded nationwide. It brought together multiple ministries – Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, and Human Resource Development – in a coordinated push for change. Among other measures of outcome, its impact is most visible in the survival rate of girls. India’s sex ratio at birth improved from 919 girls per 1,000 boys (2015-16) to 929 (2019-21). Encouragingly, 20 out of 30 States/UTs are performing better than the national average of 930.

But these improvements in sex ratio at birth are encouraging, they are just one piece of a much larger puzzle. The real power of girls’ education lies in the ripple effects it triggers across society. Educated women tend to marry later and have fewer children. India’s Total Fertility Rate has dropped to 2.0, just below replacement level. This shift is closely tied to rising female education and workforce participation. Women with secondary education are more likely to seek institutional deliveries and prenatal care. The

Infant Mortality Rate for girls has dropped from 49 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 33 by 2020. While overall female labour force participation remains a challenge, it is rising in sectors such as healthcare, education, STEM, and entrepreneurship – fields that thrive on literacy and skills. From officers in the armed forces to CEOs of tech startups, today’s educated Indian women are breaking barriers.

The multiplier effect

Educated girls grow into educated mothers – and that changes everything. Studies show that children of educated mothers perform better in school and experience better health outcomes. In Madhya Pradesh, recent surveys show that 89.5% of people are aware of BBBP, and 63.2% say it directly encouraged them to send their daughters to school. Communities reported increased support for delaying early marriage and promoting girls’ higher education. These statistics reflect changing mindsets in regions where girls were once kept from schools entirely.

This transformation is a deep-rooted change facilitated by thoughtful and effective policies aimed at empowering young women. The long-term impact of these initiatives will be even more pronounced because of the positive feedback cycle that enhances not only individual lives but entire communities. Today’s educated girls are not merely students; they are potential leaders, advocates, and change-makers of tomorrow. Educated girls are more likely to join the workforce, contribute to their families’ incomes, and invest in the education of their children.

As we look to the future, we can be hopeful that the changes initiated under Mr. Modi’s leadership will continue to gain momentum, leading to a more equitable society where every girl has the right to learn, grow, and thrive. Let’s be clear: when you educate a girl, you save a society.





More women join the labour force, but are they really employed?

In rural areas, it is difficult to separate women's domestic responsibilities from their role as helpers in household enterprises

DATA POINT

Subhanil Chowdhury
Anushree Gupta

The female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) measures the share of women who are either employed or actively seeking work. A higher FLFPR is often seen as a sign of greater gender equality and a more dynamic labour market. The FLFPR fell from 31.2% in 2011-12 to 23.3% in 2017-18, before climbing to 41.7% in 2023-24 (Chart 1). While this rise appears encouraging, a closer look reveals that women continue to face barriers – both in terms of earnings and the kind of jobs available to them.

In India, workers are broadly classified into three categories: self-employed, regular salaried, and casual workers. The NSSO tracks earnings for each of these groups. Strikingly, during the very period when the FLFPR rose, real earnings declined for all categories except casual workers in both rural and urban areas. This points to a troubling reality – more women may be entering the workforce, but they are not finding secure or remunerative employment.

Chart 1 shows that the recent rise in FLFPR is largely driven by rural women. To understand this trend better, we now turn to a closer examination of female labour force participation and employment patterns in rural India.

Economic development is typically associated with a shift of the workforce from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors. Given the recent rise in rural FLFPR, one might expect more women to be moving out of agriculture into industry or services. The data, however, suggest the opposite. The share of rural women employed in agriculture rose from 71.1% in 2018-19 to 76.9% in 2023-24, while their presence in both the secondary and tertiary sectors declined (Chart 2).

A large share of women's work takes the form of unpaid household labour, which does not count as employment in official statistics. Even within the employed category, there exists a group termed 'helpers in household enterprises' – a role that also falls under unpaid family work. So, two categories capture women attending to domestic duties, both of which are unpaid activities.

Among rural women aged 15 years and above, there has been a sharp fall in those reporting 'domestic duties' – from 57.8% in 2017-18 to 35.7% in 2023-24 (nearly 20 percentage points). This shift is mirrored by a 10.5 point rise in women counted as 'helpers in household enterprises' (from 9.1% to 19.6%) and a 10 point rise in 'own account workers and employers' (from 4.5% to 14.6%) over the same period (Chart 3). In other words, the reduction in unpaid domestic work has translated largely into self-employment, not into an expansion of wage employment.

In rural areas, it is often difficult – if not impossible – to separate women's domestic responsibilities from their role as helpers in household enterprises. This blurring of boundaries may partly explain the rise in FLFPR. It also raises a fundamental question: should such unpaid helper roles be counted as employment at all? At the same time, even within the self-employed category, the apparent increase in own account workers and employers has coincided with a decline in their real earnings. In other words, the rise in self-employment has not improved women's incomes (Chart 4).

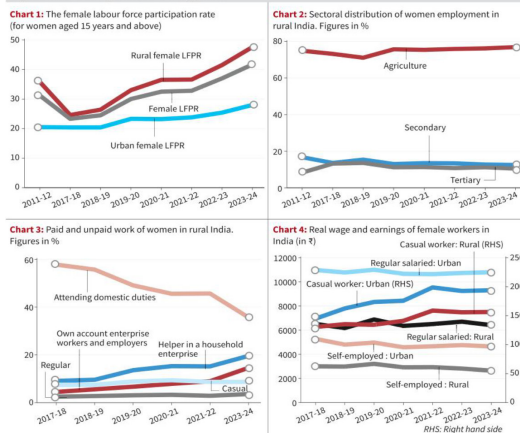
Thus, the rise in FLFPR is largely driven by an increase in women counted as helpers in household enterprises and as self-employed workers. Wage employment has not expanded, and real earnings for most categories of women workers have actually fallen. Far from signalling dynamism, this pattern points to deeper vulnerabilities in the labour market.



Facing barriers

The data for the charts were sourced from the Periodic Labour Force Survey and NSSO

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Centre directs NGOs to seek FCRA renewal 4 months before expiry

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs on Tuesday directed non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to submit applications for renewal of their Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration at least four months before expiry.

FCRA registration, which is mandatory for NGOs and associations to receive foreign funds, is renewed every five years. In a communication, the Mi-

nistry noted that several associations had been submitting renewal applications less than 90 days before the expiry of their certificates.

"Such delayed submissions do not allow sufficient time for scrutiny and for obtaining inputs from security agencies," the Ministry said. It stated that NGOs are "strictly advised to submit their renewal applications well in advance and, in any case, not later than four months before the validity expires."



Bihar has fewer Passport and Foreigners Act cases

Illegal migration and infiltration have been raised as key issues ahead of the Bihar polls according to NCRB data, most of such cases in 2023 were registered in West Bengal, followed by Tripura

Vijay Singh
NEW DELHI

With the Bharatiya Janata Party raising illegal migration and infiltration as key issues ahead of the Assembly election in Bihar, latest data by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that only five cases pertaining to the Foreigners and Passport Acts were registered in the State in 2023. The number of such cases in 2022 and 2023 stood at three and one, respectively.

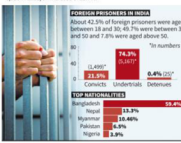
In 2023, across India, a total of 2,290 cases were registered under the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; Foreigners Act, 1946; Passport Act, 1967; Immigration Act, 1982; and Citizenship Act, 1955, according to the "Crime in India Report 2023" released by the NCRB on Monday.

The highest of 1,080 such cases were registered in West Bengal, followed by 277 cases in Tripura, 272 in Maharashtra, 167 in Tamil Nadu, and 79 in Punjab.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have both in-

Behind bars

According to the Prison Statistics of India 2023 report, the number of prisoners in the country's prisons had risen from 1,281 in 2021 to 6,956 in 2023, an increase of 35.7%



visited the issue of infiltration in Bihar in their recent speeches to justify the special internet restriction (SIR) of electoral rolls carried out by the Election Commission of India in the State.

Foreign prisoners
The "Prison Statistics of India 2023" report, also released on Monday, said that the number of foreigners in the country's prisons had risen from 6,202 in 2022 to 6,956 in 2023, an

increase of 10.7%. Among them, 21.5% (1,409 inmates) were convicted, 78.5% (5,547 inmates) were under trial, and 0.4% (25 inmates) were deemed dangerous. Bangladeshis numbered the most among foreign prisoners in Indian jails (59.4%), followed by 13.3% from Nepal, 10.46% from Myanmar, 6.3% from Pakistan, and 3.9% from Nigeria.

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The total number of cases of offences against the State increased from 1,281 in 2021 to 6,956 in 2023, an

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Maharashtra, Karnataka report most number of farmer suicides

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has said in its report that 10,786 farmers and agricultural workers committed suicide in 2023. The most number of cases was from Maharashtra (38.5%), followed by Karnataka (22.5%).

The organisations of farmers blamed the Narendra Modi government's policies for the situation, and said the decision to waive off import duty on cotton would vitiate the situation as most of the suicides were still from the cotton belts of the country.

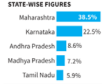
Of the 10,786 suicides from the farming sector, 4,690 were farmers or cultivators, and 6,096 were agricultural workers. The farm suicides accounted for 6.3% of total suicides

showed the systemic crisis that the Modi government could not grasp or combat. "This crisis is going to aggravate as a large number of farmer suicides take place in the cotton and soybean belt. Maharashtra has turned out to be the graveyard of farmers. The Maharashtra and Vidarbha region are cotton and soybean belts. In spite of this, the Union government is bowing to the pressure to sign Free Trade Agreements, and to U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff terrorism. The government cancelled the 15% import duty on cotton. This means that American cotton is going to come here, agriculture will be finished by these treaties," Mr. Dhawale said, adding that the NCRB data could not be trusted.

For those in distress, counselling is available at Tel:MANAS-14466

Fields of despair

The lives of 10,786 farmers and agricultural workers were lost to suicide in 2023, according to the NCRB report



1,71,418 suicides in 2023 in the country. Out of the 4,690 farmers who committed suicide, 4,553 were male and 127 were female, and out of the 6,096 suicides by farm workers, 5,433 were male and 663 were female.

After Maharashtra and Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh (8.4%), Madhya Pradesh (7.2%), and Tamil Nadu (5.9%) registered the most number of suicides. West Bengal, Bihar, Od-

isha, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, and Lakshadweep reported no suicides from the farm workers.

Commenting on the NCRB data, the president of the All India Kisan Sabha, Ashok Dhawale, said more than 10,000 suicides had been reported from the farm sector in 2021, 2022 and 2023, and it

Crime against children records 9.2% rise in 2023

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A total of 1,77,335 cases of crime against children were registered in 2023, showing an increase of 9.2% over the 2022 figure, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report.

The data compiled by the NCRB showed that the crime rate in 2023 stood at 39.9 per 1,00,000 child population in comparison to 36.6 in 2022.

The major crime heads in 2023 were "Kidnapping and abduction of children" (79,884 cases, 45%) and "Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act" (67,694 cases, 38.2%).

Madhya Pradesh topped the list with 22,393 total cases, followed by Maharashtra (22,390) and Uttar Pradesh (18,852).

Over 1.73 lakh killed in road accidents in 2023, 1.6% rise: NCRB

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

More than 1.73 lakh people were killed and 4.47 lakh injured in road accidents across the country in 2023 with nearly 46% of the victims being two-wheeler riders, according to a report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Speeding and careless driving were found to be the two major causes of road accidents.

A total of 4,64,029 road accidents took place in the country in 2023, 17,261 more than in 2022 – with a 1.6% increase in fatalities, from 1,71,100 in 2022 to 1,73,826 in 2023.

The highest number of accidents (20.7% of total) were reported between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Two-wheelers accounted for the highest number of fatal road accidents, causing 79,533 deaths, or 45.8% of total deaths, followed by pedestrians at 27,586 (15.9%) and SUV/car/jeep at 24,776 (14.3%).

Most of the deaths in two-wheeler accidents were reported in Tamil Nadu (11,490) and Uttar Pradesh (8,370). A large number of deaths due to SUV/car/jeep accidents were reported in Uttar Pradesh (19.2% of total) and a

Crash course

The NCRB report of 2023 has found that the reason for most fatal road accidents was speeding



■ 58.6% (1,01,841) of deaths attributed to speeding

■ 23.6% (41,035) of deaths attributed to dangerous driving or overtaking

■ Poor weather, driving under the influence and animal crossings caused 4,952 deaths

large number of deaths due to trucks/torries/mini truck accidents were also reported in the State (29.9% of total).

The NCRB said cause-wise analysis of fatal road accidents revealed that 58.6% (1,01,841) and 23.6% (41,035) of fatalities were due to speeding and dangerous/careless driving or overtaking, respectively.

Poor weather conditions, driving under influence of drug/alcohol and animal crossing caused 4,952 deaths.

The highest number of deaths were reported on the National Highways accounting for 34.6%, followed by State Highways at 23.4%.