

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

4th November, 2025

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India's IT dream is at a crossroads

G5-3 Economy, ST

For nearly three decades, India's Information Technology (IT) sector has been the crown jewel of the country's economic transformation – a symbol of upward mobility, global relevance, and middle-class aspiration. Though the IT industry recruits only about 1% of the Indian workforce, it contributes about 7% of the country's GDP. Young engineers from Tier-II towns once saw a job at Infosys or Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as a passport to prosperity. But today, that dream is flickering. With TCS announcing its steepest-ever layoffs – nearly 20,000 jobs shed in a single quarter – and other companies quietly following suit, the question arises: Is IT no longer the golden calf for aspiring tech professionals?

A profound metamorphosis

The answer is complex. India's IT sector is not collapsing, but it is undergoing a profound metamorphosis – one that demands urgent attention, strategic recalibration, and a renewed commitment to future-ready skills. The 'Layoff Wave' is a symptom of structural change in the industry. It is happening in the U.S. too: Amazon has announced it would reduce its corporate workforce by 14,000, thanks to deployment of AI. Meta is laying off 8,000. In India, TCS's decision to cut 3.2% of its workforce, primarily targeting mid- and senior-level roles, is not an isolated event: other IT majors are doing similar things. Industry estimates suggest that over 50,000 IT jobs may be lost by the end of the fiscal year. IT insiders say these are not likely to be mass firings in the traditional sense, but 'silent layoffs' – performance-linked exits, voluntary resignations, and delayed promotions that quietly trim the workforce without triggering headlines.

The reasons are manifold. First, AI-driven automation is reshaping the very nature of IT work. Routine tasks – reporting, coordination, basic coding – are increasingly handled by algorithms. The advent of models from companies such as OpenAI and Anthropic, alongside the rise of Agentic AI – autonomous systems capable of reasoning and executing multi-step tasks, is fundamentally disrupting India's IT services sector by automating routine work, drastically improving developer productivity, and shifting the industry's focus towards high-value, AI-driven digital transformation. While AI can never replicate human beings' capacity for empathy or emotion, these tasks do not require such qualities and can be performed without human intervention.

Second, U.S. immigration policies have grown more restrictive, with the hike in H-1B visa fees and tariff threats prompting Indian firms to localise their overseas workforce. Indian IT firms simply cannot pay \$100,000 to get a low-or



Shashi Tharoor

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mid-level professional to the U.S. to execute tasks that would not rake in such a level of profit.

Third, client budgets are tightening, especially in the U.S. and Europe, where economic uncertainty has led to cautious IT spending. In short, the outsourcing model that once relied on scale and cost arbitrage is being replaced by one that prizes specialised expertise, lean teams, and AI fluency.

The end of the Assembly line

India's IT sector was built on the back of a simple promise: hire thousands of engineers, train them in basic coding, and deploy them to serve global clients. It was a digital assembly line – efficient, scalable, and profitable. But that model is now – let us be blunt – obsolete.

Today's clients don't want armies of coders; they want solutions. They want cloud-native architectures, cybersecurity frameworks, generative AI integrations. They want fewer people who can do more. And they want them fast. This shift has exposed a skill mismatch in the Indian IT workforce. Many mid-career professionals, promoted for managerial ability rather than technical depth, now find themselves ill-equipped for the new demands. Legacy skills – SAP ECC, mainframes, non-cloud platforms – are less relevant. To take just one example: SAP ECC (SAP ERP Central Component) is the core of SAP's traditional enterprise resource planning (ERP) software suite, the digital backbone that helps large organisations manage their day-to-day business operations across departments. Today AI can replicate the skills needed to operate it. Mastery of that component is no longer such an indispensable asset in an IT professional. The question arises: fine, but what else can you do?

The result is a painful churn: experienced workers being let go, fresh graduates struggling to find entry points, and companies scrambling to retrain their staff. In the face of this rapid technological shift, the government should consider requiring IT companies engaging in mass layoffs to provide a mandatory 6-9 months' salary as a compensation package, offering a crucial safety net for workers suddenly losing their livelihoods and needing to secure new skills for the evolving job market.

And yet, all is not lost for our IT sector. India's tech proficiency still commands global respect. It contributes over \$280 billion to the economy, employs nearly 6 million people, and powers digital transformation across industries. But the sheen of guaranteed success – the idea that a tech degree equals a stable career – is fading. For young professionals, the path is no longer linear. A computer science degree is not enough. One must master AI, data science, cloud computing, and cybersecurity – and keep learning. The days

of coasting on basic Java or .NET (or even SAP ECC) are over.

From retrenchment to reinvention

So, what can we do? If India wants to retain its IT edge, it must act on multiple fronts. For policymakers, the challenge is to reimagine skilling. India's engineering colleges must overhaul their curricula. Government programmes must incentivise AI literacy, not just digital literacy. And industry must invest in reskilling, not just recruitment.

The first obvious task is AI 'upskilling' on a very large scale. TCS has already upskilled over 550,000 employees in basic AI skills and 100,000 in advanced ones. This must become the norm, not the exception. Public-private partnerships can accelerate this effort.

Along with this, the need for urgent curriculum reform is imperative. Engineering education must move beyond rote coding. Courses in machine learning, ethics in AI, and product thinking should be mainstream. Soft skills – communication, collaboration, critical thinking – are equally vital.

Our startup ecosystem will need greater support from the government and from venture capitalists. India's tech future lies not just in services but in products. Supporting AI startups, deep-tech ventures, and innovation hubs can create new jobs and diversify the sector. The government must engage with global partners to ensure visa access, data sovereignty, and trade stability. Protectionism abroad must be matched with policy clarity at home.

For those laid off or displaced in the current churn, severance pay is not enough. They will need career transition support, mental health resources, and retraining subsidies. The Indian IT industry has never felt the need for social safety nets before, but the time for them is now.

The Indian IT story is not ending – it is evolving. From manpower to mindpower, from outsourcing to innovation, from quantity to quality, this change is challenging but unavoidable. The transition will undoubtedly be painful. But it can also be purposeful.

We must stop measuring success by headcount alone. It is no longer about the number of bright Indians employed in IT. Instead, let us ask: Are we building solutions that matter? Are we empowering workers to thrive in the AI age? Are we telling a story of resilience, reinvention, and relevance? I asked friends in the know if the bloom is off India's IT rose. Their answers suggest that the rose may have lost some petals, but its roots are deep, and its bloom can return – if we nurture, water and fertilise it with vision, skill, and courage. This will need policy leadership. But there is no reason yet to lose hope.

The Indian IT story is not ending – it is evolving. The transition will undoubtedly be painful. But it can also be purposeful

The case for energy efficiency

India has doubled down on clean energy, yet the power you plug into today is dirtier than it was five years ago. This is a paradox that is at the heart of our energy transition.

As of June 2025, non-fossil fuel sources account for about 50% of India's total installed capacity. However, India's grid emission factor (GEF) – a measure of the carbon intensity of electricity – has increased from 0.703 tCO₂/MWh in 2020-21 to 0.727 tCO₂/MWh in 2023-24, according to the Central Electricity Authority. This is a striking reversal: more renewables should mean a cleaner grid. Why is India's grid getting dirtier instead?

The capacity-generation mismatch

The answer lies in the distinction between capacity and generation. While renewables now account for a large share of installed capacity, they deliver far less electricity over the year compared to coal or nuclear. Solar and wind plants typically run at 15-25% capacity utilisation, versus 65-90% for coal and nuclear.

In 2023-24, renewables (including hydro) supplied just 22% of total electricity; the rest was fossil fuel-powered. The gap between headline capacity and actual delivered energy is widening, and India's fast-growing demand is being met by the most carbon-intensive source in the system: coal.

India's electricity demand also peaks when renewables are least available. Solar floods the grid in the afternoon but fades by evening, just as peak loads from households surge. Fossil fuel plants, therefore, act as the system's shock absorbers – dispatched to meet night-time and peak demand – but they also lock in emissions.

This temporal mismatch highlights the limits of capacity expansion alone. To truly decarbonise, India needs flexibility along with more gigawatts.



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If India wants to actually decarbonise its grid, efficiency must become the first fuel – and flexibility, not fossil fuels, must power the future

While Round-the-Clock (RTC) renewable electricity, at less than ₹5 per kWh, costs less than new coal-based power stations, upscaling is slow. We need policies that enable more land, transmission lines, and investment.

The role of energy efficiency

Energy efficiency provides the opportunity. Often called the “first fuel”, it reduces demand before supply even needs to be generated. By lowering the evening and night-time peaks, efficiency reduces reliance on coal when emissions are highest. Scaling up efficient appliances – fans, air conditioners, and motors – and embedding efficiency in buildings and industrial processes can reshape this curve.

The benefits extend beyond reduced coal consumption and enhanced opportunity for integrating renewables. Energy efficiency enhances flexibility by flattening demand peaks and allowing demand to align with renewable availability. It also prevents lock-in by replacing old, inefficient technologies early.

Energy efficiency is invisible by design – diffuse, distributed, and cumulative. Yet, without it, the energy transition cannot be achieved. Concrete evidence from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency shows that India saved about 200 Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent of final energy, equivalent to around 1.29 GT of CO₂eq, and close to ₹760,000 crore in savings, from FY2017-18 to FY2022-23.

India is not alone, but its pathway is unique. Countries such as France, Norway, and Sweden boast grid emission factors of just 0.1-0.2 tCO₂/MWh, largely thanks to large shares of hydro and nuclear electricity. India, at 0.727, starts from a coal-heavy base and faces relentless demand growth. This makes efficiency part of the core strategy, not just an option. Without it,

renewables risk being stranded in the wrong hours.

What needs to be done

To unlock the full value of clean energy, India must urgently do the following. First, it must enable homes and offices to connect their batteries into virtual power plants, helping the grid glide over the peak demand. Second, it must accelerate appliance efficiency standards. It must move markets towards 4- and 5-star products and steadily raise benchmarks. Third, it must support small and medium enterprises to adopt efficient motors, pumps, and processes. Fourth, it must enable flexible pricing by adopting tariff structures that reward consumers for shifting demand to periods of high renewable availability. Fifth, it must introduce scrappage incentives for old, energy-guzzling equipment. Sixth, it must enable electricity distribution companies to procure “electricity services”, such as green cooling, which allows for high-efficiency air conditioning powered by RTC clean power.

The Central Electricity Authority's National Electricity Plan projects a fall in India's GEF to 0.548 by 2026-27, and 0.430 by 2031-32. Achieving this requires more than just building solar and wind farms. It demands a flexible system approach – with efficiency at the centre.

India has grown its economy while cutting emissions intensity by 33% between 2005 and 2019, as noted in its Fourth Biennial Update Report to the UNFCCC. But the rising GEF calls for a balanced approach: accelerate supply-side investments in renewables, storage, and transmission, while embedding efficiency across households, industries, and cities. If India wants to actually decarbonise its grid, efficiency must become the first fuel – and flexibility, not fossil fuels, must power the future.

UPSC Mains GS -3 , 2025

Q) How can India achieve energy independence through clean technology by 2047? How can biotechnology play a crucial role in this endeavour ? (Answer in 150 words)

Ramnami TRIBE

**Modi Breaks Protocol to Honour Ramnami Tribe
Delegation's Wish to Adorn Him with Tribal Headgear**



Aspect	Details
Location	Central & Northern Chhattisgarh (Raipur, Bilaspur, Janjgir-Champa, and Mungeli districts)
Origin	Emerged in the late 19th century as a peaceful resistance against caste-based discrimination.
Founder	Parsuram Bhardwaj, a low-caste sharecropper who promoted the idea of “Ram is everywhere” (Nirgun Bhakti).
Belief System	Nirgun Bhakti tradition – worship of the formless Ram, similar to Kabir Panth philosophy.
Unique Practice	Members tattoo the word “Ram” all over their bodies and faces as an act of spiritual assertion and equality.
Cultural Symbols	White attire inscribed with “Ram”

A Kerala story

Eradicating poverty should be seen as a never-ending task

Kerala, known for its exemplary record in social and human development, and for healthcare systems comparable to those of developed nations, achieved another milestone on its 69th formation day, on November 1 – the eradication of extreme poverty. This resulted from a four-year, meticulously planned programme involving a gamut of agencies, spearheaded by the local self-government department, alongside extensive community participation. It was during the first Cabinet meeting of the second LDF government led by Pinarayi Vijayan in May 2021 that the Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP) was launched. Successive State governments deserve credit for Kerala's people-centric development and decentralised planning, which ensured that poverty reduced from 59.8% in 1973-74 to 11.3% in 2011-12. NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index (2023) stated that Kerala was the least impoverished State, based on the head-count ratio. Just 0.55% of Kerala's population was multidimensionally poor – far below the national average of 14.96%. Instead of relying on self-enrolment, the government deployed nearly 4 lakh trained enumerators, supported by a robust local body system and Kudumbashree workers, to identify the abjectly poor. After several levels of vetting, 64,006 extremely poor families – comprising 1,03,099 individuals, many lacking basic documents – were identified based on the four-point criteria of access to food, health, means of livelihood, and housing. A uniform solution was inadequate for such diverse needs, necessitating an experiment in welfare governance: the preparation of custom-made micro plans for each identified family and the provision of essential support such as identification documents, housing, livelihoods, regular medicine, cooked meals, palliative care and, in some cases, organ transplants.

Combating poverty is a never-ending task and criticism of the claim of erasing extreme poverty – particularly regarding the plight of the tribal population – is inescapable. The State government has launched EPEP 2.0 to prevent relapse and to ensure that no new household falls into extreme poverty. The LDF has pledged to tackle all forms of poverty in mission mode. Critics of the 'Kerala Model' have often cited stagnant growth and rising unemployment as evidence of its perceived failure. The State has accelerated major infrastructure projects and high-tech green industries to bridge the deficit in these areas. It has also been skilling the educated to alleviate joblessness. The EPEP shows that progressive governance can be rooted in welfareism and growth simultaneously, without compromising social safety or sustainability. The largely community-driven model may not be flawless, but it is self-evolving and strengthens democracy at the grassroots. It presents an alternative development paradigm – a Kerala story worth propagating.

New pathways to end extreme poverty

Kerala's participatory model offers lessons for the world

STATE OF PLAY

Jiju P. Alex

The Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP), by the Government of Kerala, has redefined the notion of State interventions aimed at alleviating poverty, and it has the potential to evolve into a global model.

Most importantly, it highlights a new approach to identifying and addressing deprivation. Apart from nearly achieving the first and second Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it also demonstrates how poverty can be eliminated in a participatory manner by involving local governments, the community and development agencies, with consistent follow-up.

Kerala's approach to poverty reduction differed from the country's traditional poverty alleviation programmes. The long-enacted policies for land reforms, universal primary education, and public distribution would have a lasting impact on the livelihood security of its people.

Furthermore, democratic decentralisation enabled local governments to implement numerous local-level projects. Along with this, Kudumbashree emerged as a pioneering model of the self-help group (SHG) networks in India, particularly for its scale and approach to poverty eradication and women's empowerment.

The incidence of poverty in the State was 59.74% in 1973-74, which reduced to 11.3% in 2011-12. According to the NITI Aayog, Kerala is now the least impoverished State, with a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 0.55 per cent in 2019-21, a decrease from 0.70% in 2015-16. Despite this



achievement, there were still islands of extreme poverty in the State, which required customised assistance, based on a deeper understanding of its causes.

Following the MPI framework, the factors contributing to extreme poverty were identified through a participatory process. Poor health conditions, disability, old age, a lack of entitlements, food, land, shelter, employment, facilities, and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in children were considered severe distress factors. The historical deprivation of the marginalised sectors of society, such as SC, ST, and fishermen and the social deprivation of HIV-affected persons, orphans, urban poor, and the LGBTQIA, were also identified.

Impoverished households were selected through surveys conducted by a team of volunteers from Kudumbashree, people's representatives, officials, and residents, led by the local governments.

Around 1,18,309 poor households were scrutinised through a participatory nomination process from wards and divisions, from which 87,158 were shortlisted as recommended by the local governments. Subsequently, they were interviewed using a mobile application, and a priority list of 73,747 households was prepared. The Grama Sabhas further scrutinised this priority list for another

round of eliminating ineligible households, resulting in the final list of 64,006 extremely poor families.

The most innovative feature of EPEP is the creation of customised micro-plans for each identified household, moving away from a one-size-fits-all welfare model. The programme unfolded in three distinct stages: the immediate care plan, the intermediate plan, and the long-term plan.

While the immediate care plan addressed urgent requirements such as food, medical care, and entitlement documents for social security, the intermediate plan focused on providing transitional support to improve living conditions and ensure self-reliance, like temporary housing. The long-term plans focused on establishing livelihoods or securing permanent shelter, among other objectives. The process was monitored by a Management Information System (MIS) to ensure timely delivery and accountability.

The EPEP has unequivocally demonstrated a plausible and highly effective pathway to eradicate extreme poverty by using the principles of multidimensional poverty and leveraging decentralised governance. What next?

Sustaining this effort warrants continuous monitoring to ensure that these households do not return to extreme poverty. The current system of interdepartmental coordination offers immense potential for detecting early warning signals of deprivation from vulnerable households. A dedicated institutional mechanism is required to sustain this achievement and showcase this model as a lasting solution.

The author is a member of Kerala State Planning Board

What are the challenges with the High Seas Treaty?

What does the principle of 'common heritage of humankind' mean? Is the treaty ambiguous?

Padmashree Anandhan

The story so far:

The High Seas Treaty was ratified by over 60 countries in September; it will now be enforced in January 2026. The treaty sets rules to preserve and use marine biodiversity sustainably and addresses threats from climate change, overfishing and pollution.

What is the treaty about?

The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement, as the High Seas treaty is formally referred to, creates an all-inclusive framework to govern and manage common marine biodiversity. It identifies Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs) as the common heritage of humankind, insisting on a fair and equitable sharing of benefits. Besides, the Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs) include Marine Protected Areas

(MPAs) that can be recognised to protect biodiversity. This will help in improving climate resilience and provide food security, combining science and indigenous knowledge. The treaty also entails Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for events potentially affecting these areas, especially when cumulative and transboundary impacts are taken into account. The first steps for the treaty began two decades ago. In 2004, the UN General Assembly formed an ad-hoc working group to fix the gap in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982, which did not have clear guidelines on protecting BBNJ. By 2011, states had agreed to negotiate on four key issues, mainly MGRs, ABMTs, EIAs, and capacity building and technology transfer. Following this, four Intergovernmental Conference sessions were held between 2018 and 2023. The parties to these discussions finally reached an agreement in March 2023, which led to the adoption

of the treaty in June 2023.

What are the major issues?

First is the uncertainty over the principles of "common heritage of humankind" and "freedom of the high seas." The "common heritage principle" supports equitable access and benefit-sharing of marine resources for all, while the "freedom on the high seas" stresses on unrestricted rights of states to carry out navigation, resource usage and research activities. However, the common heritage principle is only applicable partially, especially when it comes to MGRs. This shows a compromise instead of a resolution. It also creates ambiguity in exploration, research and benefit sharing. Second, is the use of MGRs. The governance of MGRs was earlier not defined, raising concerns over "biopiracy" and unfair exploitation by developed countries. Developing nations were concerned that they would be excluded from the profits of scientific

discoveries from the high seas. The treaty now includes a framework on sharing monetary and non-monetary benefits, but with no clear details on how such benefits will be calculated or shared. Third is the reluctance of big powers to get engaged. The treaty is under threat due to non-participation from the U.S., China, and Russia, who are yet to ratify the treaty. Fourth, is interaction with multilateral institutions. The treaty must coexist and not ignore existing international institutions, such as the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). The BBNJ agreement must also blend with existing international treaties to prevent legal conflicts and lead to more fragmentation of ocean governance.

What next?

The treaty provides more clarity to the UNCLOS provisions, focusing on science-based requirements for EIAs, ABMTs and benefit sharing. However, the ambiguous language in the MGRs and the common heritage of humankind principle challenge the execution of the treaty. There is a need for dynamic management of MPAs, and regular monitoring. To deliver the BBNJ, linking climate-biodiversity with the ocean will be crucial for resilient management.

Padmashree Anandhan is a project associate at NIAS, Bangalore.

THE GIST

▼ The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement, as the High Seas treaty is formally referred to, creates an all-inclusive framework to govern and manage common marine biodiversity.

▼ The "common heritage principle" supports equitable access and benefit-sharing of marine resources for all.

▼ Developing nations were concerned that they would be excluded from the profits of scientific discoveries from the high seas.

'Digital arrests' are a very big challenge; victims, mostly elderly, lost ₹3,000 cr. in India alone: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said more than ₹3,000 crore had been scammed by fraudsters from victims, mostly drawn from the elderly population, through "digital arrests".

A Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant was referring to a confidential report submitted by the Union government. Justice Kant, who is the Chief Justice of India-designate, said the report showed that the problem of digital arrests was a "very big challenge". "Much more than we thought..." Justice Kant observed.

"The report shows the extent of fraud is very big... ₹3,000 crore was collected from victims in India alone. What would be the



The judiciary will pass stringent orders to strengthen the hands of agencies against the fraudsters, says Justice Kant. GETTY IMAGES

suffering at the global level?" Justice Kant asked.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, agreed with Justice Kant, saying digital arrest scam was initially found to be beyond what they had expected.

Justice Kant said the judiciary would pass harsh and stringent orders to

strengthen the hands of the agencies against the fraudsters, "give you all support". "Otherwise, this problem will magnify, and the victims are aged people," Mr. Mehta said.

In an earlier hearing, the Supreme Court had orally mooted tasking the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) with probing

the menace of digital arrests orchestrated by fraudsters posing as judges and police officers who use forged documents.

Attorney-General R. Venkataramani had submitted that these cyber crimes originate from across the border and were fashioned by "money-laundering gangs".

'Scam compounds'

The Solicitor-General had informed that the organised cybercrimes behind digital arrests were generated from "scam compounds" and done at a large-scale level.

The Supreme Court had originally taken *suo motu* cognisance of a case of digital arrest of a senior citizen couple in Haryana's Ambala on the basis of forged orders of the court and probe agencies by

fraudsters to extort ₹1.05 crore. However, the court was later informed that there were numerous cases across the country in which innocent people, especially senior citizens, were threatened with "cyber arrests" by criminals, who misuse Artificial Intelligence and other advanced technology to morph courtrooms and police stations, unless they cough up huge sums of money.

"The impact of the problem is great. There is not only a financial but also a human angle. Gullible people are promised employment abroad and reduced to the status of human slaves. Criminals morph the faces of judges and make calls to victims with the Court rooms shown as the background," Mr. Mehta had said.

UNESCO Creative City Network

Lucknow enters UNESCO list as ‘Creative City of Gastronomy’

Global recognition celebrates the city’s centuries-old Awadhi cuisine, living food traditions and inclusive cultural heritage

Updated – November 01, 2025 10:53 pm IST – Lucknow

During the 43rd Session of the UNESCO General Conference, Lucknow was officially designated as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) under the Gastronomy category—recognizing its rich culinary heritage, particularly Awadhi cuisine.

- **Established:** 2004 by UNESCO.
- **Objective:** Promote cooperation among cities that have identified creativity as a driver for sustainable urban development.
- **Fields Covered (7):**
 1. Crafts and Folk Arts
 2. Media Arts
 3. Film
 4. Design
 5. Gastronomy
 6. Literature
 7. Music

Indian Cities in the UCCN

City	Category
Jaipur	Crafts & Folk Arts
Varanasi	Music
Chennai	Music
Mumbai	Film
Hyderabad	Gastronomy
Kozhikode	Literature
Gwalior	Music
Srinagar	Crafts & Folk Arts
Lucknow (2025)	Gastronomy