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The road to a disease-free world goes through water



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The global effort to eradicate polio has been one of the greatest success stories of public health. Since 1988, cases of wild poliovirus have fallen by more than 99%. Vaccination, surveillance, and community outreach have reduced the global threat of a disease to the brink of being eradicated.

However, as a marathon runner might know, the last mile is often the hardest, requiring tenacity and unwavering self-belief. This is the type of dedication that we need to sustain as the race to eradicate polio reaches its end game. As we work together to finish the job, we also need to think beyond vaccines, about the systems that may inadvertently enable transmission, and one of those critical systems is water.

Polio can spread through contaminated water, thus making safe water crucial to preventing transmission. To make progress permanent, we must understand that health and water are integral to the equation.

According to WHO and UNICEF, in the year 2024, 2.1 billion people lacked safely managed drinking water and 3.4 billion lacked safely managed sanitation. More alarmingly, no access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene contributed to at least 1.4 million preventable deaths in 2019.

This is where water presents one of the greatest opportunities to bolster global health.

We need to regard water infrastructure as preventive health infrastructure. Clean water can prevent disease. Safe sanitation can break the chain of transmission. Wastewater systems can help us identify pathogen circulation. By studying the presence of pathogens in wastewater, the spread of disease can be more closely tracked. These mechanisms enable states to evolve from responding to outbreaks to anticipating them.

The UAE has seen the power of this approach. For many years, the UAE and His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan have worked with The Gates Foundation and global partners to accelerate the eradication of polio and neglected tropical diseases. The Reaching the Last Mile Fund, established by the UAE and the Gates Foundation, works in dozens of countries to accelerate the elimination of diseases that disproportionately affect people living in poverty.

Together, we are focused on reaching the world's most underserved communities, particularly children living in areas where access to healthcare is extraordinarily difficult.

This is also the philosophy behind Reaching the Last Mile: marginalised communities who are at most risk cannot be left behind at the last mile. Though the last mile is where the work is hardest – it is also where investment can change most lives. That same thinking should equally be applied to water. What if wastewater networks could detect a pathogen before a patient appears before a doctor will illness? What if AI can identify a developing public health risk, giving communities the chance to act early? Much work in this direction is already in process. Wastewater surveillance has become an important tool in the fight against polio, because the virus can be detected in wastewater even when no case of paralysis is reported.

In Abu Dhabi, AI-enabled wastewater surveillance serves as an early detection system, able to identify potential public health risks and inform early intervention. In 2025, the European Commission unveiled the European Wastewater Surveillance Dashboard, a tool designed to track movements of diseases through wastewater monitoring and analysis.

This is the future we should be building towards: water systems that do more than moving water; water systems that help us predict and prevent diseases. The infrastructure that protects communities from poliovirus can help address other diseases too. The wastewater systems that detect one pathogen can help detect others too. The investments in sanitation that improve public health can support sustainable development and improve quality of life.

This is the future we should be building towards: water systems that do more than moving water; water systems that help us predict and prevent diseases

This is why water must be seen as an opportunity to save lives, strengthen resilience and build healthier communities. However, more must be done to bridge the gap between health and water policy. We need greater collaboration, more integrated investment and a shared understanding that progress in one area often depends on progress in another.

This is the ethos underpinning the upcoming 2026 UN Water Conference. Taking place in Abu Dhabi, the conference will bring the world together to accelerate action on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Together, we will envision a new world of possibilities with water, unlocking the value in the world's water systems through innovation, collaboration and financing in water infrastructure.

To achieve this, governments, development institutions and the private sector must work together to bring solutions to the communities that need them most. Global collaborations on the last mile of polio give us a reason to believe that progress is possible. We have an opportunity now to apply that mindset to water, because the future of water is not only about securing a resource; it is about protecting people.

And if we get this right, the water flowing through a community tomorrow will do more than keeping people healthy.

It will give the next generation something that should never have been out of reach: the chance to grow up healthy, safe and free from preventable disease.

1. The Road to a Disease-Free World Goes Through Water

GS Paper II – Health | GS Paper III – Environment

Context: The global fight against infectious diseases, particularly polio, requires not only vaccination and surveillance but also access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

1. Why Is Water Important for Disease Prevention?

- **Polio transmission:** Poliovirus primarily spreads through the faecal–oral route, including contaminated water and food.
- **Global progress:** Since 1988, wild poliovirus cases have declined by more than 99% through vaccination, surveillance and community outreach.
- **Sanitation gap:** According to WHO and UNICEF, in 2024, 2.1 billion people lacked safely managed drinking water and 3.4 billion lacked safely managed sanitation.
- **Preventable deaths:** Unsafe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene contributed to at least 1.4 million preventable deaths in 2019.

2. Water Infrastructure as Public Health Infrastructure

1. **Safe Drinking Water:** Prevents transmission of waterborne pathogens.
2. **Sanitation Systems:** Prevent contamination of water sources and break the chain of disease transmission.
3. **Wastewater Surveillance:** Detects pathogens in sewage, helping identify disease outbreaks before they become widespread.
4. **Early Warning Systems:** Enables authorities to identify emerging health risks and initiate timely interventions.

3. Emerging Role of Technology

- **AI-enabled surveillance:** Can identify potential public health risks and support early intervention.
- **Wastewater monitoring:** Helps detect pathogens, including poliovirus, even before paralysis cases are reported.
- **European Wastewater Surveillance Dashboard (2025):** Developed to track disease patterns through wastewater monitoring and analysis.
- **Integrated surveillance:** Wastewater systems designed for one pathogen can also help detect other infectious diseases.

4. International Initiatives

1. **Reaching the Last Mile Fund:** Established by the UAE and the Gates Foundation to accelerate the elimination of diseases affecting underserved communities, particularly neglected tropical diseases.
2. **2026 UN Water Conference:** Scheduled in Abu Dhabi, UAE, to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation.
3. **Global Cooperation:** Emphasis on partnerships, innovation and financing for water infrastructure and public health.

5. Way Forward

1. **Integrated WASH Approach:** Treat water, sanitation and hygiene as essential components of public health policy.
2. **Wastewater Surveillance:** Expand pathogen monitoring for early disease detection.
3. **Last-Mile Delivery:** Prioritise vulnerable and underserved communities with limited access to healthcare and sanitation.
4. **Technology and Innovation:** Use Artificial Intelligence and data-driven surveillance to strengthen disease prevention.
5. **Global Partnerships:** Strengthen cooperation among governments, international organisations and the private sector to finance sustainable water infrastructure.

• GEOPOLITICS

Karakoram-2026: What deepening China-Pak ties mean for India



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CHINA AND Pakistan's longstanding partnership, while not a formal alliance, has emerged as a defining feature of South Asia's security architecture. Over the years, their military cooperation has moved beyond defence acquisitions and joint exercises towards greater functional integration and interoperability.

In this context, last month's joint exercise, Karakoram-2026, in China's Xinjiang province — which borders Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh — was significant.

Why the exercise matters

Karakoram-2026 was the first joint-army level exercise between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Pakistan Army. It expanded on earlier naval, air, and counterterrorism exercises. The focus was on challenging high-altitude operations, relevant to the PLA's Western Theatre Command that oversees the border with India.

Phase One saw troops from both sides practising specialised tactics, close-quarter combat, and drone operations. Phase Two entailed joint command, mixed formations, and teams undertaking counterterrorism clearance operations, joint manoeuvres, and coordinated fire drills.

The equipment used was Chinese, including small arms, armoured assault vehicles, infantry fighting vehicles, and support systems, such as artillery and drones.

The China-Pakistan nexus

The strategic, economic, and military partnership between China and Pakistan dates to the 1963 Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement, under which Pakistan ceded the Shaksgam Valley, part of Gilgit-Baltistan, to China. The subsequent decades witnessed China's growing role in building Pakistan's nuclear and missile programme,, primarily hedging against India. Today, China considers Pakistan central to its South Asia policy.

The core pillars of the China-Pakistan nexus are:

MILITARY SUPPLIES: China accounts for roughly 70-80% of Pakistan's imported military hardware. Major acquisitions include J-10C and JF-17 fighter aircraft, Type 054 A/P frigates, Hangor-class submarines, and Wing Loom drones.

DEFENCE CO-PRODUCTION: Both nations regularly co-produce fighter jets, main battle tanks (Al-Khalid), missiles, naval platforms, and electronic and surveillance systems.

INFORMATION: This encompasses intelligence sharing, cyber warfare, satellites (BeiDou for navigation), and information-cum-narrative alignment.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Strategic projects include the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Gwadar Port under the Belt and Road Initiative.

DRILLS: The two countries regularly conduct bilateral and multilateral drills.

Strategic implications

The Karakoram-2026 exercise followed a joint patrol conducted by Chinese and Pakistan security personnel at Mantika Pass in Gilgit-Baltistan.

In May 2025, when India launched aerial strikes (Operation Sindoor) targeting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan, the collusion between Beijing and Islamabad came into sharp focus.

Beyond equipment familiarisation, Karakoram-2026 facilitates the exchange of operational experience, standardisation of procedures, and command and control coordination. There are intelligence reports of Pakistan Army officers posted in key Chinese military formations.

India needs to closely monitor this evolving military relationship. The challenge for Delhi is no longer just to contend with two adversarial neighbours but to prepare a coherent national security strategy that addresses the convergence of Chinese and Pakistani military capabilities.

A new trilateral?

- The change of government in Bangladesh adds a new dimension to defence and diplomatic ties in the region.
- Bangladesh has advanced plans to purchase J-10CE Chinese fighter jets and its pilots will be trained by Pakistan at Jessore airbase, near India's Siliguri corridor.

2. Karakoram-2026: What Deepening China–Pakistan Ties Mean for India

Source: The Indian Express – Explained
GS Paper II – International Relations | GS Paper III – Internal Security

Context: China and Pakistan conducted their first joint army-level military exercise, **Karakoram-2026**, in China's Xinjiang province. The exercise marks a deeper phase of their military cooperation and raises concerns for India's security.

1. Karakoram-2026: Key Features

- **Participants:** China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Pakistan Army.
- **Location:** Xinjiang province, China, bordering India's Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Significance:** First joint army-level exercise between the two countries, expanding their existing naval, air and counterterrorism cooperation.
- **Focus:** High-altitude warfare, counterterrorism and joint operational capabilities.

Major activities:

1. **Phase I:** Specialised tactics, close-quarter combat and drone operations.
2. **Phase II:** Joint command, mixed formations, counterterrorism clearance operations, coordinated manoeuvres and fire drills.
3. **Equipment:** Chinese small arms, armoured assault vehicles, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery and drones.

2. Evolution of the China–Pakistan Strategic Partnership

The relationship has evolved from diplomatic cooperation into an integrated military, technological and economic partnership.

Historical foundation – 1963 Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement:

- Pakistan ceded the Shaksgam Valley to China, a territory claimed by India as part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- China subsequently expanded its military and strategic support to Pakistan, including assistance in developing its nuclear and missile programmes.

Four Major Pillars of Cooperation

1. **Military Supplies:** China accounts for approximately 70–80% of Pakistan's imported military hardware. Major acquisitions include J-10C and JF-17 fighter aircraft, Type 054A/P frigates, Hangor-class submarines and Wing Loong drones.
2. **Defence Co-production:** Joint development and production of fighter aircraft, Al-Khalid main battle tanks, missiles, naval platforms and electronic surveillance systems.
3. **Intelligence and Technology:** Intelligence sharing, cyber cooperation, satellite navigation through China's BeiDou system and information coordination.
4. **Strategic Infrastructure:** China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

3. Strategic Implications for India

1. **Two-Front Security Challenge:** Growing military coordination between China and Pakistan increases the possibility of simultaneous strategic pressure on India's northern and western borders.
2. **Military Interoperability:** Joint exercises improve operational coordination, standardisation of procedures and command-and-control capabilities.
3. **Advanced Military Technology:** Chinese fighter aircraft, drones, surveillance systems and intelligence support strengthen Pakistan's military capabilities.
4. **Border Security:** China's military engagement with Pakistan in the Xinjiang region has implications for India's security in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.
5. **Strategic Encirclement Concerns:** CPEC, Gwadar Port and China's expanding regional influence create additional strategic challenges for India.

4. Emerging Regional Dimension: Bangladesh

- The political change in Bangladesh adds another dimension to China's expanding defence and diplomatic engagement in South Asia.
- Bangladesh has reportedly considered purchasing Chinese J-10CE fighter aircraft, with pilot training in Pakistan at Jessore airbase.
- This development has strategic implications for India, particularly because of Bangladesh's geographical proximity to the Siliguri Corridor.

5. Way Forward for India

1. **Two-Front Preparedness:** Strengthen military coordination and operational readiness along the northern and western borders.
2. **Defence Indigenisation:** Accelerate domestic production of fighter aircraft, drones, surveillance systems and advanced weapons.
3. **Intelligence and Surveillance:** Improve satellite monitoring, cyber capabilities and border intelligence.

4. **Regional Diplomacy:** Strengthen engagement with neighbouring countries and India's regional partnerships.
5. **Strategic Preparedness:** Develop a comprehensive national security approach addressing the growing China–Pakistan military partnership.

STARBASE

SpaceX 'catches' spaceship in a first, raising hopes of reusability



AP

Elon Musk's SpaceX on Saturday pulled off the first-ever "catch" of the Starship, a technical feat showing the feasibility of fully reusable rockets that would bring affordable spaceflight one step closer to reality. Up until now, spaceships have been discarded or destroyed after missions, making each launch an expensive venture. AFP

3. SpaceX’s Starship Achieves Historic Recovery

Source: The Hindu
GS Paper III – Science & Technology

Context: SpaceX successfully caught its Starship spacecraft (upper stage) using mechanical arms called *Chopsticks*, marking a major breakthrough in reusable spaceflight.

Key Developments:

1. **Earlier achievement (2024):** SpaceX successfully caught the Super Heavy booster (first stage).
2. **November 2026:** It successfully caught the Starship upper stage after its orbital journey.
3. **Historic milestone:** The **United States became the first country** to catch an orbital spacecraft’s upper stage using launch-tower mechanical arms.

Significance: Potential recovery and reuse of both stages could reduce launch costs, enable faster launches and support future Moon and Mars missions.

INBRIEF



'India eyes place among top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030'

India is targeting a place among the world's top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and the top five by 2047, with investments of nearly $10 billion projected in five proposed greenfield coastal shipbuilding clusters, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said. Inviting global shipbuilders, shipping lines and financial institutions to invest in the country's shipbuilding sector, Mr. Sonowal said India was poised to emerge as a major global shipbuilding destination. The five proposed greenfield clusters are located at Dugarajapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Kuchhadi in Gujarat, Dighi in Maharashtra, Kendrapada in Odisha and

4. India’s Ambition to Become a Top 10 Shipbuilding Nation by 2030

Source: The Hindu – In Brief
GS Paper III – Economy | Infrastructure | Blue Economy

Context: India aims to become one of the world’s top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and the top five by 2047, supported by nearly $10 billion in proposed investment.

1. Targets and Proposed Investment

1. **Investment:** Nearly $10 billion is projected across five proposed greenfield coastal shipbuilding clusters.
2. **Proposed locations:**

State	Location
Andhra Pradesh	Dugarajapatnam
Gujarat	Kuchchadi
Maharashtra	Dighi
Odisha	Kendrapada
Tamil Nadu	Thoothukudi

3. **Investment mobilisation:** The government is inviting global shipbuilders, shipping lines and financial institutions to participate.

2. Significance for India

1. **Economic growth:** Creates employment and strengthens manufacturing and allied industries.
2. **Strategic autonomy:** Reduces dependence on foreign shipyards for commercial and strategic vessels.
3. **Maritime security:** Strengthens domestic capacity to build and repair ships.
4. **Export potential:** Positions India as a competitive global shipbuilding destination.
5. **Blue Economy:** Promotes coastal industrialisation and maritime-led growth.

3. Key Challenges

1. **High capital requirements:** Shipbuilding requires large, long-term investments and affordable finance.
2. **Import dependence:** Limited domestic production of engines, propulsion systems, marine equipment and advanced components raises costs.
3. **Technology gap:** Lower automation, outdated production methods and limited research and development affect productivity.
4. **Skilled manpower shortage:** Need for specialised ship designers, marine engineers and technical workers.
5. **Global competition:** Indian shipyards face strong competition from established shipbuilding economies such as China, South Korea and Japan.
6. **Regulatory delays:** Land acquisition, environmental approvals and multiple clearances can delay projects.

4. Way Forward

1. **Affordable financing:** Strengthen long-term maritime financing and ensure effective implementation of shipbuilding support schemes.
2. **Domestic supply chains:** Promote indigenous manufacturing of marine engines, electronics and other critical components.
3. **Technology upgradation:** Adopt automation, digital ship design and modern production techniques.
4. **Skill development:** Build industry-linked training and research institutions.
5. **Cluster-based development:** Integrate shipyards with ports, logistics, component manufacturers and repair facilities.
6. **Green shipbuilding:** Invest in energy-efficient vessels and cleaner maritime technologies to gain a competitive advantage.

A poverty line that falls short



Saumitra Bhaduri

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There is no serious doubt that poverty in India has fallen sharply over the past decade. However, researchers and policymakers cannot agree on how many are still poor. Depending on the estimate, the share ranges from about 5% to more than 26%. Take the recent World Bank report. At its international line of $3 a day (2021 PPP), 2.6% of Indians were poor in 2022-23. Raise the line to $4.20, the bank's benchmark for lower middle-income countries, and the figure jumps to around 16.1%. Same country, same year. Only the yardstick changed. A low level of extreme poverty does not necessarily mean poverty is not still a major issue. Where you draw the line decides how much economic insecurity you see.

India's own figures tell a similar story. For example, SBI Research (2025) takes the Tendulkar line of 2009, adjusts it for inflation, and gets poverty of 7.2% in rural India and 4.6% in urban India for 2022-23. Rangarajan and Dev (2014), using an inflation-adjusted version of the Rangarajan Committee line, arrive at 10.8%. Further, Sethu, Surya and Ruthu (2024), who rebuild the Rangarajan method from the latest consumption survey, report 26.4%. Most of that gap boils down to the lines themselves: SBI's Tendulkar-based lines use, after adjusting for inflation, about ₹1,632 a month per person in rural areas and ₹1,944 in urban areas. In contrast, Sethu et al. use much higher thresholds of ₹2,515 and ₹3,639. And the outcomes are obvious: Higher lines, higher poverty. Method matters too. One camp takes an old line and adjusts it for inflation. The other reconstructs the line from spending patterns in the new survey.

Reliable poverty estimates are not just for academic purposes. India has made real progress, but without a credible benchmark, it is hard to say how much, or how much remains to be done

The World Bank does it differently again. Its international lines are set in PPP dollars so countries can be compared, which helps show where India stands globally. However, they are not built on a basket designed to reflect what it costs to meet basic needs in India itself. That is why the $3 figure sits near the low domestic estimates and the $4.20 figure near the high ones.

Poverty line problem

To understand why India is in the position today, we have to go back to how poverty was measured historically. It started with minimum calorie needs. The Alagh Task Force in 1979 set separate calorie norms for rural and urban populations, and later estimates built on them. The Lakdawala Committee refined the approach with State-specific poverty lines and price indices. In 2009, the Tendulkar Committee dropped the direct calorie method for a wider consumption basket that counted spending on health and education, and put poverty at 21.9% in 2011-12. Critics thought its thresholds were too low. The Rangarajan Committee then proposed higher lines, putting the poverty rate at 29.5% for the same year.

The problem was further compounded by the lack of comparable data. The 2017-18 consumption survey was never published, and the next full one did not arrive until 2022-23. For more than a decade, India argued about poverty without an official consumption-based number to anchor the argument. Researchers, as a result, have had to work with assorted poverty lines, price indexes and reconstructed estimates.

Multidimensional poverty has also gained prominence, since consumption alone clearly misses part of the picture. The MPI looks at deprivation across health, education and living standards, including sanitation, drinking water and housing. NITI Aayog says multidimensional poverty fell from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21. Its 11.28% figure for 2022-23 is a projection from earlier trends, not the result of a fresh survey. For comparison, the World Bank puts it at 15.5%, and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at 16.4% for 2019-21.

Reliable poverty estimates are not just for academic purposes. India has made real progress, but without a credible benchmark, it is hard to say how much, or how much remains to be done.

A country that wants to be high-income needs to know how many can live decently. Until India sets a new official poverty line, "How poor is India?" will keep getting several answers. The 2022-23 HCES gave researchers fresh data to work with, and hopes to settle on a single answer.

To end, the World Bank's most telling figures are not about the fall in extreme poverty. Two other figures are insightful. First, 80% of Indians lived below the $8.3-a-day upper-middle-income line in 2023, even though per capita income per day is more than three times that threshold. A low extreme-poverty count is masking deep inequality. Second, 30% of Indians still lack access to basic sanitation, a number that should trouble us all.

5. A Poverty Line That Falls Short

Author: Saumitra Bhaduri, Professor, Madras School of Economics
GS Paper III – Poverty | Inclusive Growth

Context: Although poverty in India has declined considerably, the absence of an updated and credible poverty benchmark creates uncertainty about the actual extent of deprivation.

1. The Poverty Estimation Debate: Why Do Estimates Differ?

The estimated proportion of India's population living in poverty varies significantly depending on the poverty threshold, consumption basket and methodology adopted.

Source / Methodology	Estimated poverty
World Bank – $3/day (2021 PPP), 2022–23	2.6%
World Bank – $4.20/day (2021 PPP), 2022–23	16.1%
SBI Research – Tendulkar-based, 2022–23	7.2% rural; 4.6% urban
Rangarajan-based estimate (2014)	10.8%
Sethu, Surya and Ruthu (2024)	26.4%

What explains the variation?

- **Different poverty thresholds:** A higher poverty line includes more people facing economic insecurity.
- **Different consumption baskets:** Estimates vary according to what is considered essential expenditure.
- **Price adjustments:** Inflation and regional cost-of-living differences influence the purchasing power of households.

- **Different methodologies:** Domestic and international poverty estimates are not directly comparable.

Central concern: Being above the extreme-poverty line does not necessarily mean that a person can afford a dignified standard of living.

2. Evolution of Poverty Estimation in India

India's approach has gradually shifted from calorie-based poverty measurement towards broader consumption-expenditure assessment.

Committee	Contribution
Alagh Task Force (1979)	Established calorie-based poverty norms, separately for rural and urban populations.
Lakdawala Committee	Refined poverty estimates using state-specific poverty lines and price indices.
Tendulkar Committee (2009)	Moved beyond direct calorie norms and incorporated expenditure on health and education; estimated poverty at 21.9% in 2011–12.
Rangarajan Committee	Recommended higher consumption thresholds and estimated poverty at 29.5% in 2011–12.

Persistent data gap: The 2017–18 Household Consumer Expenditure Survey was not published. The next comparable survey became available in 2022–23. Consequently, researchers have relied on different poverty lines, price indices and reconstructed estimates.

3. Why Does the Existing Poverty Line Fall Short?

1. **Changing consumption needs:** Rising expenditure on healthcare, education, housing and other essentials may not be adequately reflected in older benchmarks.
2. **Regional variations:** The cost of meeting basic needs differs across states and between rural and urban areas.
3. **Economic insecurity:** Households above the extreme-poverty threshold may remain vulnerable to illness, unemployment and unexpected expenditure.
4. **Non-monetary deprivation:** Consumption-based estimates alone cannot capture inadequate sanitation, drinking water, housing, healthcare and education.

4. Multidimensional Poverty: Looking Beyond Income

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) complements monetary poverty measurement by examining deprivation across three dimensions:

Dimension	Indicators
Health	Nutrition, child mortality
Education	Years of schooling, school attendance
Living Standards	Sanitation, drinking water, housing, electricity and other basic facilities

Estimates cited in the article:

- **NITI Aayog:** Multidimensional poverty declined from 24.85% in 2015–16 to 14.96% in 2019–21. The 11.28% figure for 2022–23 is a projection based on earlier trends.
- **World Bank:** 15.5% for 2019–21.
- **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI):** 16.4% for 2019–21.

The article also highlights that around 80% of Indians lived below the World Bank's $8.3-a-day upper-middle-income poverty line in 2023, while around 30% lacked access to basic sanitation.

These figures underline an important distinction: escaping extreme poverty is not the same as achieving adequate living standards.

5. Way Forward: Towards a More Credible Poverty Measurement

1. **Updated poverty benchmark:** Establish a realistic poverty line reflecting contemporary minimum consumption requirements.
2. **Reliable data collection:** Conduct regular household consumption surveys and ensure timely publication.
3. **Regional sensitivity:** Account for variations in prices and essential expenditure across states.
4. **Multiple indicators:** Combine consumption-based poverty estimates with multidimensional deprivation measures.
5. **Identify vulnerable households:** Give attention to those who remain economically insecure despite being above the extreme-poverty threshold.

Conclusion: India's poverty reduction must be assessed not merely by how many people cross an extremely low poverty line, but by how many can afford basic necessities and achieve a dignified standard of living.

Marginal decrease in unemployment rate in October: survey

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Unemployment Rate (UR) in the country showed a marginal decrease in October, compared to last month for persons aged 15 years and above, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation here on Monday.

The UR was 4.9% in October, 0.1 percentage points less than 5% reported in September. Conducted by the National Statistics Office, the PLFS also noted that compared to October 2025, the overall UR declined by 0.3 percentage points from 4.2% to 3.8%. "In urban areas UR among female of age 15 years and above during October 2026 was 8.7% compared to 6.0% observed for male of the same age group," the PLFS noted.

On a year-on-year basis, the overall male UR declined from 5.1% in October 2025 to 4.9% in October 2026 and the Ministry said in a release that the improvement was more pronounced in rural areas, where male UR fell from 4.6% to 4.3%. Overall female UR decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 5.0% from 5.4% in the previous year.

Overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) improved to 55.7% in Oc-

6. Marginal Decline in Unemployment Rate in October 2026

Source: The Hindu
GS Paper III – Indian Economy | Employment and Labour

Context: The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), reported a marginal decline in India's unemployment rate in October 2026.

1. Key Findings of PLFS – October 2026

Unemployment Rate (UR):

- Overall unemployment rate (15 years and above): **4.9%**, down from 5.0% in September 2026.
- Year-on-year decline: 5.2% in October 2025 to 4.9% in October 2026.
- Rural unemployment: 4.2%, down from 4.4%.
- Urban unemployment: 6.7%, down from 7.0%.

Gender-wise unemployment:

- Rural males: 4.3%.
- Rural females: 3.8%.
- Urban males: 6.0%.
- Urban females: 8.7%.

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):

- Overall LFPR: 55.7%, compared with 55.5% in September.
- Rural LFPR: Increased from 58.0% to 58.4%.
- Urban LFPR: Declined from 50.7% to 50.5%.

2. Understanding the Three Important Labour Indicators

Indicator	Meaning
Unemployment Rate (UR)	Percentage of unemployed persons among the total labour force.

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)	Percentage of the population working or actively seeking/available for work.
Worker Population Ratio (WPR)	Percentage of employed persons in the total population.

Important distinction: A decline in unemployment does not automatically mean more jobs have been created. People may also leave the labour force, which is why UR must be analysed alongside LFPR and WPR.

3. Major Observations

1. **Rural improvement:** Rural unemployment declined for both men and women, while rural LFPR increased.
2. **Urban–rural gap:** Urban unemployment (6.7%) remained higher than rural unemployment (4.2%).
3. **Gender disparity:** Urban female unemployment (8.7%) remained significantly higher than urban male unemployment (6.0%).
4. **Marginal overall improvement:** The decline in unemployment was accompanied by a slight increase in overall labour force participation.

4. Issues Requiring Attention

1. **Urban employment:** Higher urban unemployment indicates continuing difficulties in generating adequate employment opportunities.
2. **Female workforce participation:** Higher urban female unemployment highlights barriers to women's access to employment.
3. **Quality of employment:** Unemployment figures alone do not reveal job security, wages, underemployment or informal employment.
4. **Sustainable job creation:** Employment growth must keep pace with the expanding working-age population.

5. Way Forward

1. Promote labour-intensive manufacturing and employment-generating sectors.
2. Expand women's access to safe workplaces, childcare and flexible employment.
3. Strengthen vocational training and industry-linked skill development.
4. Improve formalisation, social security and working conditions.
5. Track employment quality alongside unemployment and labour force participation.