



नीति आयोग
NITI AAYOG



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ECONOMICS

01. Muhammad Ahsan Rana

[Political Economy of Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Programme](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 33, 16 August, 2025

Pakistan's largest cash transfer programme, the Benazir Income Support Programme, has grown substantially since its launch in 2008. Through an analysis of official documents and interviews with key informants, the political economy of this growth is examined. The material interests of various stakeholders whose support has sustained the programme are looked into. The role of the International Monetary Fund is also examined. It is argued that in addition to political mileage and material gain for politicians and bureaucrats, the programme performs several latent functions, such as legitimising the Pakistani state and pacifying the surplus population, which have been crucial in sustaining support from key stakeholders, including the IMF.

02. Jacob Joshy

[Crisis of Economics Education](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 34, 23 August, 2025

Alex M Thomas's article, "The Politics of Microeconomics" (EPW, 19 July 2025), exposes the political underpinnings of marginalist microeconomics and the plight of economics education in general. Its publication is timely, coming at a moment when universities across the world, especially in India, are under the radar for all the wrong reasons. As Thomas rightly argues, "[t]he design of curriculum and syllabi is also political" (p 20), and it is no less true, especially in the case of economics. Economics, as taught in universities, is a conservative discipline dominated by values that "operate as intellectual devices of control" (p 18). For those who do not subscribe to this dominant perspective, making an alternative sense of it is extremely difficult, if not impossible. As a result, studying economics as a dissenter in the classrooms becomes a constant battle where you have to confront these conservative values espoused by your classmates and teachers.

03. Tuuli Paukkeri, Terhi Ravaska

[Labour supply responses to reducing the risk of losing disability insurance benefits](#)

Economica: 21 August 2025

We study whether disability insurance (DI) recipients increase their labour supply after the introduction of an automatic reinstatement policy, i.e. a programme mitigating the risk of losing eligibility for DI benefits due to a trial period of substantially increased work above an individual earnings threshold. Using Finnish administrative data, we identify the policy's impact on partial DI recipients by comparing them to rejected applicants with similar work histories, health impairments and work capacities. Based on our estimation results, automatic reinstatement of benefits may increase working among specific subgroups, but on average is not effective in increasing labour supply. To complement our empirical analysis, we model the perceived risk of

losing eligibility for DI benefits as a type of adjustment friction in the institutional context where the budget set includes a notch, and use behavioral elasticity estimates from earlier literature to study the role of financial incentives. Counterfactual simulations reveal that financial incentives play a significant role in the effectiveness of automatic reinstatement of benefits, highlighting the interplay between financial and non-financial aspects of the DI system.

EDUCATION

04. Paramjit, Apoorva Gupta, Sonia Goel and Sumajeet Singh

[Exploring the Linkage between Education and Financial Autonomy of Women Working in the Urban Informal Sector](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 31, 02 August, 2025

The autonomy of women in terms of taking decisions in financial matters is crucial in accelerating empowerment and reducing gender biases. Accessibility to education can enhance this autonomy by improving women's ability to question, obtain knowledge, and utilise the right information. Using data from a primary survey of working women in the urban informal sector in Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi-NCR, this article argues that accessibility to education can sometimes reduce women's autonomy to use their income and take independent financial decisions.

05. Sarthak Agarwal and Debdatta Pal

[Fuel Collection and Children's Educational Performance](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 34, 23 August, 2025

The authors would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for useful suggestions. They also acknowledge valuable insights and remarks received from Jeff Nugent, Zhen Chen, Sanjay Singh, Somdeep Chatterjee, Kaushik Bhattacharya, and participants of the 97th Annual Conference of the Western Economic Association, where a preliminary version of this paper was presented. In developing countries, rural households often rely on solid fuels for cooking, heating, and lighting, with women and children typically collecting these fuels from forests, their own land, and nearby areas. Using Indian households' survey data, children from fuel-collecting households are seen to exhibit poorer learning outcomes in reading, writing, and mathematics skills, compared to those who do not collect fuel. Such children are likely to spend less time on homework and tuition, which potentially explains the lower learning levels. Additionally, large heterogeneity in learning levels along the lines of caste and land possession is observed, with mixed results concerning children's gender.

06. Shreya Mishra

[Does the Political Elite Influence Children's Learning Outcomes?](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 34, 23 August, 2025

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan aims to champion universal elementary education, ameliorating schooling infrastructure and provision of incentives. However, learning outcomes remain challenging. Could unfavorable learning outcomes be attributed to pervasive elite capture? The influence of the political elite on the learning outcomes of children aged 5–17 years is examined using the India Human Development Survey 2011–12 database. Children of politically connected households are found to have a better in-school experience, higher attendance, and improved learning outcomes. The impact of political elite capture on learning outcomes varies with gender, significantly affecting male students, but not their female counterparts.

07. Smriti Singh

[Students, Viral Videos, and Academic Freedom](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 34, 23 August, 2025

Academic freedom has been discussed worldwide in the context of rising threats to the autonomy of modern universities. Similar discussions in the Indian context have focused on the state's role in censorship and control of higher education institutions. This paper, however, engages with the role of students and the character of studentship within the current sociopolitical environment. It reflects on two incidents that happened during the pandemic year to problematise the place of studentship in academic freedom.

08. T S Kavita Rajeshwari, Avanindra Nath Thakur and Indrani Sengupta

[Does a Mother's Education Matter for Childcare in India?](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 34, 23 August, 2025

Using the National Statistical Office's Time Use Survey 2019, it is found that tertiary-educated mothers devote 159 more minutes weekly to childcare than non-literate mothers. While existing research highlights educated women's withdrawal from the labour market, it is found that higher maternal education correlates with increased childcare time, irrespective of employment status and family structures. Educated working mothers often exhibit more intensive parenting, particularly in multigenerational households. This suggests that education enhances caregiving responsibilities or household bargaining power, challenging the notion that higher education leads to employment–childcare trade-offs.

09. M Suhaas and Satyaki Dasgupta

[Reclaiming Public Education](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 35, 30 August, 2025

This is a response to the editorial, “Learning Gaps, Leaky Fixes” (EPW, 2 August 2025), which offers a sobering account of India’s deepening education crisis, exposing both the limits of data-centric performance metrics and the consequences of persistent underfunding. While it rightly critiques superficial pedagogic interventions and declining public investment, an urgent concern that demands more attention is the state’s silent and systemic retreat from public education, primarily through the closure of government schools and rising privatisation.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

10. Neeraj Kumar and P Mahendra Varman

[Quantifying the Monetary Value of Environmental Pollution](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 32, 09 August, 2025

The monetary value of environmental pollution, particularly air pollution and water pollution, is evaluated. The findings reveal that the levels of air pollution depicted by nitrogen dioxide, and water pollution depicted by biochemical oxygen demand, have a significant adverse impact on the life satisfaction of individuals in India. Specifically, in the case of nitrogen dioxide, people are willing to accept 21%–33% of their annual income in exchange for exposure to air pollution. In contrast, for improved water quality, individuals are willing to accept 11%–21% of their annual income.

11. M Suhaas and S Subramanian

[Decentralising Disaster Governance](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 31, 02 August, 2025

This letter is a response to Jos Chatukulam’s article, “Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025: Old Wine in a New Bottle?” (EPW, 26 July 2025), underlining the continuing centralisation of India’s disaster governance system. The 2025 amendment provides structural insertions in the form of the Urban Disaster Management Authority (UDMA) and disaster databases. The UDMA aims to increase urban disaster response capabilities, but it institutionalises an urban bias because

it does not give rural disaster management similar structural attention. In a nation where most disaster-affected groups are based in the countryside, this should be a concern. Yet it fails to adopt a community-led governance paradigm, especially in rural India, where the climate–livelihood nexus is deeply rooted in vulnerability.

12. Wanda Mimra and Christian Waibel

[Contracting Environments and Efficiency in Markets with Hidden Information: An Experiment](#)

[American Economic Journal: Microeconomics, vol. 17, no. 3, August 2025](#)

This paper provides the first systematic analysis of the role of contracting environments on market outcomes and efficiency in markets with hidden information using experimental methods. When markets are plagued by hidden information, competition does not necessarily ensure efficient market outcomes. This crucially depends on the nature of the hidden information. We present a parsimonious experimental design that serves to compare the different contracting environments for both types of hidden information markets, private and common values. The degree of equilibrium play that we find is strikingly high, particularly in the complex cases of competitive common values markets.

FINANCE/BANKING

13. Anuradha Patnaik

[Should the RBI Target Only on the Core Inflation?](#)

[EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 32, 09 August, 2025](#)

Whether the Reserve Bank of India should target inflation excluding food prices is empirically evaluated. Using monthly data on year-on-year headline inflation, food inflation and core inflation from January 2014 to January 2024, the article assesses the exact nature of food inflation in India and tests if second-round effects of food inflation exist. The empirical results reveal that food inflation is persistent in India and its volatility spills over to core inflation. The core inflation converges with the headline inflation and so significant second-round effects exist.

14. Muhammad Ahsan Rana

[Political Economy of Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Programme](#)

[EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 33, 16 August, 2025](#)

Pakistan's largest cash transfer programme, the Benazir Income Support Programme, has grown substantially since its launch in 2008. Through an analysis of official documents and interviews with key informants, the political economy of this growth is examined. The material interests of various stakeholders whose support has sustained the programme are looked into. The role of the International Monetary Fund is also examined. It is argued that in addition to political mileage and material gain for politicians and bureaucrats, the programme performs several latent functions, such as legitimising the Pakistani state and pacifying the surplus population, which have been crucial in sustaining support from key stakeholders, including the IMF.

15. Raphael Corbi and Fabio Miessi Sanches

[Church Tax Exemption and Structure of Religious Markets: A Dynamic Structural Analysis](#)

[American Economic Journal: Microeconomics, vol. 17, no. 3, August 2025](#)

We study the effects of church tax exemptions on the structure of religious markets. Using the Brazilian experience as a showcase, we develop and estimate a dynamic entry model of religious organizations based on temple opening and closure in geographically isolated markets. Counterfactual simulations suggest that tax exemptions stimulated entry by all religions, but disproportionately benefited evangelical denominations: The evangelical share of temples increased by approximately 20 percentage points. By combining difference-in-differences estimates with model-based counterfactuals, we show that these policies also increased the support for evangelical caucus politicians, raising their vote share by 8 percent in the 2018 election.

16. Andrew E. Clark, Anthony Lepinteur

[I can't forget about U: lifetime unemployment and retirement wellbeing](#)

[Economica:21, August 2025](#)

It is well known that unemployment leaves scars after re-employment, but does this scarring effect persist even after retirement? We analyse European data on retirees from the SHARE panel, and show that the wellbeing of the retired continues to reflect the unemployment that they experienced over their working life. These scarring effects are somewhat smaller for older retirees, but larger for those who arguably had higher expectations regarding the labour market when they were active. The lower wellbeing from lifetime unemployment does not reflect lower

retirement income. This long-run scarring for those who have left the labour market underlines that contemporaneous correlations significantly underestimate the wellbeing cost of unemployment.

HEALTH

17. Indira Chakravarthi and Shweta Marathe

[Private Healthcare Sector in India](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 35, 30 August, 2025

In over three to four decades, the private health sector has evolved from small individual practices to a large, organized industry in India. However, the development of a reliable, updated official database or registry at the national or state level that provides comprehensive information on characteristics of private hospitals is missing. The existing valuable data from national surveys, case studies, news reports, and anecdotal accounts cannot, and should not, be substitutes for the actual, ground level, and real-time information about private providers.

18. Daniel Auer and Johannes S. Kunz

[Communication Barriers and Infant Health: The Intergenerational Effect of Randomly Allocating Refugees across Language Regions](#)

American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, Vol. 17, No. 3, August 2025

This paper investigates the intergenerational effect of communication barriers on child health at birth. We study refugees in Switzerland who come from French- or Italian-speaking countries and who, upon arrival, are randomly allocated to different cantons in which either German, French, or Italian is the dominant language. Children born to mothers who were exogenously allocated to a region whose dominant language matches their origin language are, on average, 72 grams (or 2.2 percent) heavier. Further analyses suggest that this effect is likely driven by information about health-related behavior and services. Coethnic networks, however, can partly compensate for communication barriers.

LAW AND SOCIETY

19. **Kuldeepsingh Rajput and S Irudaya Rajan**

[Connecting Migrants to Social Protection](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 32, 09 August, 2025

The Ministry of Labour and Employment launched the e-Shram portal to create a national database of unorganised workers, including migrants. Since its launch, the e-Shram portal has functioned merely as a “registration drive” for workers. The “one-stop solution” has been introduced to facilitate seamless access to social security schemes for e-Shram registrants. While this is a significant step, technical glitches, difficulties in registration due to limited digital literacy, language barriers, migratory status and inadequate outreach to migrant communities hinder its effective utilisation.

20. **Amarbahadur Yadav and Sonu Chauhan**

[Social Justice or Social Divide?](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 32, 09 August, 2025

The proposed caste census for 2026–27 has renewed a major national debate at the intersection of social justice, data-driven governance, and identity politics. Proponents of the caste-based census regard it as a long-overdue corrective measure to address historical injustices and reshape welfare policies, while critics caution that it may further reinforce caste-based identities and intensify divisions in society. The editorial, “Beyond a Headcount” (EPW, 10 May 2025), cautions that a mere enumeration risks becoming a partisan tool, unless it objectively captures the socio-economic realities of caste.

21. **Monika and Nilakshi Biswas**

[A Clarion Call or a Gender-biased Solution?](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 33, 16 August, 2025

Skilling has emerged as a popular choice for corporate social responsibility funding. The evaluations of the skilling programmes have uncovered unique opportunities and learnings of gender biases within such initiatives. This article explores the ground realities of various evaluated programmes and sheds light on the challenges that women beneficiaries face. It highlights how funders can leverage contextual expertise, be aware of existing prejudices within

a community, and understand market realities to create highly tailored and effective programmes that produce lasting impact.

22. Alok Prasanna Kumar

[Balancing Privacy and Accountability](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 34, 23 August, 2025

Transparency is an important form of accountability, but is facing pushback in the form of claims made relying on the right to privacy. The Election Commission of India's recent use of the right to privacy to deny CCTV footage of polling and machine-readable electoral rolls has once again brought a seeming conflict between the right to privacy and transparency.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

23. Ishwar Chandra Awasthi

[Technological Transformation and the World of Work](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 33, 16 August, 2025

Technology is rapidly transforming the labour market, reshaping job demands and displacing many workers. While the fear of job loss due to technological advancements is not new—echoing the 19th-century Luddite protests against machinery—today's changes are on a scale and pace never seen before. As technology evolves, many traditional jobs are becoming obsolete, but, at the same time, new roles are emerging in production, business models, and services. This ongoing transformation is vast, and its impact is being keenly felt in sectors like manufacturing, where automation is increasingly replacing human labour in areas such as painting, welding, assembly and inspections.

24. Milena Nikolova, Anthony Lepinteur and Femke Cnossen

[Just another cog in the machine? A worker-level view of robotization and tasks](#)

Economica: 11 August 2025

Technological change has led to a decline in the share of routine and physical jobs, and a rise in the share of abstract and social ones at the economy level. However, much less is known about how these trends unfold at the individual level. Do workers' tasks become more or less routine

and physical? Do workers shift towards more social and abstract activities? This paper is the first to explore these questions in the context of robotization. We use survey data from 20 European countries to develop worker-level indices of physical, routine, abstract and social tasks, which we link to industry-level robotization exposure. Using instrumental variable techniques, we find that robotization reduces physically demanding tasks but increases routine tasks, while also limiting opportunities for cognitively challenging work and human interaction. This study provides a worker-centric perspective on the relationship between technology and task composition, revealing insights that aggregate analyses miss.

RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

25. Hastimal G Sagara, Keshab Das and Sonal Jain

[The Smart Cities Mission in India](#)

EPW, Vol. 60, Issue No. 35, 30 August, 2025

An Assessment and a Case Study

The Smart Cities Mission has made notable progress in building sustainable infrastructure, particularly in urban transport, traffic management, and smart water supply, in several cities. However, inadequate matching of financial allocation by the state governments, sluggish work progress in project implementation by local bodies, and poor maintenance of facilities have remained as grey areas of this mission. The performance of the SCM with special reference to Ahmedabad city is examined by identifying opportunities, innovations, and challenges concerning urban governance.