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AGRICULTURE

1. Hartej Singh Kochher

[Can Farmer Producer Organizations' Structure Be Anti-competitive?](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 8, 21 February, 2026

While farmer producer organisations offer significant benefits, including improved market access, productivity, and income for member farmers, their structure raises concerns about potential anti-competitive implications, such as market control, exclusive agreements, collusive behaviour, and impacts on related markets. International frameworks offer insights into balancing collective bargaining with fair competition. Legislative intervention and a nuanced regulatory approach are suggested to ensure that FPOs' operations do not undermine competition while achieving economic objectives for farmers. The central sector scheme, Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), was launched by the Government of India in 2020. The scheme aimed to enhance farmers' incomes through better bargaining power on account of the economies of scale that can result from collective action (GoI 2021). Though FPOs existed and were functioning in various parts of the country earlier as well, the formation and promotion of 10,000 FPOs was envisaged across the country under the scheme. Instead of individual farmers negotiating the price of their produce, grouping or collectivisation of farmers into FPOs could improve their bargaining capacity and hence raise their incomes through more remunerative prices of their produce (GoI 2023). Similar advantages were to be expected in production through easier and economical availability of inputs, machinery, seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides (ICAR 2022).

ECONOMICS

2. Rahul Suresh Sapkal, Kinchan Chakma and Daksha C Parmar

[A Race to Nowhere Do Longer Working Hours Lead to Increased Productivity?](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 07 February, 2026

The extension of statutory working-hour limits has emerged as a pro-business instrument, promoted by the union government as part of the ease of doing business agenda. While such labour law reforms appear to have supported manufacturing performance in select capital-intensive industries, they have shifted the social costs of adjustment onto workers while increasing employer profits. This article examines the economic rationale for changes to work-time regulations, focusing on the Factories Act, 1948. Using evidence from the Annual Survey of

Industries, it questions the assumptions of the neoclassical labour demand model and argues that longer working hours may undermine workers' welfare. In June 2025, India overtook Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy, with a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of \$4,187.02 billion, marginally higher than Japan's \$4,186.43 billion. This development reinforced India's global economic standing. Subsequently, policy attention shifted towards the introduction of a range of business-friendly reforms aimed at mobilising private capital investment at the state level, with the stated objective of becoming the third-largest economy by 2028 (PIB 2025a). These measures included production-linked incentive schemes, innovation grants for start-ups, tax credits for research and development, employee-linked incentive programmes, and relaxed regulatory compliance. While these initiatives were formulated by the union government, their implementation was largely devolved to the states. This decentralised approach intensified competition to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and generate employment for the young workforce, often leading to labour deregulation through weakened enforcement or legal amendments favouring business interests (Echeverri-Gent 2024).

3. Guy Numa, Sammy Zahran

[W. E. B. Du Bois and Economics: A Reappraisal](#)

Journal Of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

W. E. B. Du Bois is widely considered one of the most prominent American intellectuals of the twentieth century. While Du Bois has been praised for his contributions to sister disciplines, his contributions to economics have been underappreciated. Drawing upon published and unpublished sources documenting his academic training, his involvement in the economics profession, and his overall scholarship, this article shows that Du Bois made enduring contributions to economic science. We trace his intellectual formation as a student of the German Historical School of economics, analyzing his pioneering use of empirical methods to document the plight of Black Americans. Du Bois emphasized the role of power and institutions in structuring distributional outcomes and the importance of economic and social uplift. One implication is that by conducting intra- and intergroup analyses of racial, health, occupational, income, and wealth disparities, Du Bois anticipated the empirical and theoretical aims of stratification economics.

4. Laura Castillo-Martinez and Ricardo Reis

[How Do Central Banks Control Inflation? A Guide for the Perplexed](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

Central banks have a primary goal of price stability. They pursue it using tools that include the interest they pay on reserves, the size and the composition of their balance sheet, and the dividends they distribute to the fiscal authority. We describe the economic theories that justify the central bank's ability to control inflation and discuss their relative effectiveness in light of the historical record. We present alternative approaches as consistent with each other, as opposed to conflicting ideological camps. While interest-rate setting may often be superior, having both a monetarist pillar and fiscal support is essential, and at times pegging the exchange rate or monetizing the debt is inevitable.

5. Kevin A. Bryan

[The Economic Impacts of Artificial Intelligence: A Multidisciplinary, Multi-book Review](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

This essay reviews seven books from the past dozen years by social scientists examining the economic impact of artificial intelligence (AI). These works offer valuable insights—AI as cheap prediction, architectural barriers to adoption, data as an economic asset, implementation challenges. However, they offer little guidance when it comes to the transformative scenarios considered plausible by many AI researchers. Economists have made great progress in explaining how to use AI within existing production functions, who benefits, and why; what remains needed is rigorous advice to policymakers concerned about rapid increases in labor churn, scientific development, labor–capital shifts, or existential risk.

6. Ryan Bubb

[Palladino, Lenore. Good Company: Economic Policy after Shareholder Primacy](#)

Journal of Economic Literature Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

Contemporary debates over corporate purpose typically pit shareholder value against stakeholder welfare. In *Good Company: Economic Policy after Shareholder Primacy*, Lenore Palladino advances a more ambitious thesis. She contends that the American embrace of shareholder primacy—the normative view that business corporations should be managed primarily or exclusively to maximize returns to shareholders—since the 1980s has done more than generate

harmful externalities or concentrate wealth. It has actively shrunk the economic pie by hollowing out the productive capacity of the firm.

7. Evan Starr

[The Economics of Noncompete Clauses](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 40, No. 1, Winter 2026

For over 600 years, debates over noncompete clauses have centered on whether they function as efficient contracting tools or anticompetitive restraints on workers. This article reassesses that debate in light of recent policy attention and new empirical and theoretical research. Proponents argue that noncompetes are necessary to protect investments in training and trade secrets, increasing productivity and wages. However, recent studies indicate that the widespread use of noncompetes—frequently extending beyond roles involving sensitive information—and their enforceability lower mobility, wages, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Moreover, in many cases, less restrictive contractual terms appear to safeguard firm interests. Evidence of spillovers to other workers and across state boundaries, as well as behavioral effects even when noncompetes are unenforceable, raises questions about whether existing state-level enforcement regimes adequately address their observed impacts.

8. Ranjit Sau

[From 50 Years Ago: First Congress of Third World Economists](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 61, Issue No. 9, 28 February, 2026

During the last quarter of a century the political map of the world has changed fast and in a profound manner. But the transformation of the world political order has not always been accompanied by transformation of the internal and international economic order. This disjunction has not even been noticed by the economists of the third world. It is all the more ironic as the third world has been the main theatre of fierce political warfare. Economists by and large lag behind politicians and journalists; this is more so in the third world. The complexities of the reality baffle them: ostrich-like, they bury their heads in the sands of the theorems on revealed preference, factor price equalisation, dynamic efficient trajectory, and the like, not knowing that thereby they are glorifying a system which never existed in fact but is held out, in fiction, as a utopia lying in wait at the end of the tunnel. There are exceptions, though. There are a few who

have dared to look reality in the face, and to unmask its pretensions. Some have gone even further: to challenge reality, and to shape its future course. The First Congress was meant for these economists. Economic theory fails to keep pace with the march of events. What is worse, the third world economists habitually bow before borrowed gods. If advanced world capitalism is counting on a new Keynes to arrive for its rescue from the present crisis, chances are that the new Keynes would be installed by them as the deity in the third world universities. The First Congress was not for those economists.

EDUCATION

9. Krishna Kumar, Manisha Priyam and *Sadhna Saxena*

[From 25 Years Ago: Looking Beyond the Smokescreen: DPEP And Primary Education in India](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 7, 14 February, 2026

The system of primary education in India has gone through significant structural changes over the last decade or so. Some of these changes are still unfolding, and the eventual shape they will take cannot be easily predicted. The changes are pervasive — ranging from alterations in the role of the state to definition of the professional status of teachers. Despite the scale and the speed at which they have occurred, there is hardly any recognition of these changes in the social sciences, let alone any concerted analysis, critical or otherwise. All one can find in the name of analysis is a body of promotional literature. Apathy towards history and a studied blindness towards the linkages between education and social change are two prominent characteristics of this literature. It is our contention that this manner of analysis has helped the state to construct a smokescreen, which discourages any critical study of primary education policies and impact. As it is, the social sciences in India have been indifferent to the study of education. In the context of recent trends in the state's relationship with society and education, the traditional indifference of the social sciences towards the study of education has become a kind of consent.

10. Sandeep Hegade And Yogini Andalgavkarkulkarni

[Inclusion-Exempt Schools How Policy Enables Elite Educational Insulation](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 7, 14 February, 2026

India's Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 proclaims universal inclusion, yet elite private schools remain structurally exempt through regulatory autonomy, fee discretion, and selective enforcement. Operating via interlocking mechanisms of fee-gating, board-gating, and spatial-gating, these institutions consolidate caste–class homogeneity while evading equity mandates. This article contends that such policy-induced bifurcation undermines constitutional equality and fragments democratic citizenship. Genuine equality of opportunity demands system-wide inclusion that deliberately encompasses the very institutions shaping privileged trajectories.

11. Anagha Ingole

[Translation As Archiving Ideas and Their Form Phule's Poetics On Education](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 8, 21 February, 2026

Rohini Mokashi-Punekar's *the Third Eye and Other Works: Mahatma Phule's Writings on Education* is one of the first authoritative English translations of the play *Trutiya Ratna*. Translated as the Third Eye, this is a Marathi play written by Jotiba Phule in 1855, also termed as the first modern Marathi "play of ideas." The play traces an encounter of a peasant caste family with religious superstition, internal and external critiques of Brahminical religion, and an eventual understanding that they develop vis-à-vis education. The play has been read in Marathi literary scholarship as a Socratic dialogue where countering views and arguments are presented for the characters to eventually tease out a more refined understanding. Though the refined understanding that gets teased out here is not that of a concept or an ideal but of one's own situation and self-knowledge. The book primarily consists of translations from Marathi into English of two of Phule's works, the play and a ballad poem (*Vidyakhataytil Brahman Pantoji* translated as Brahmin Teachers in the Education Department). Along with these translations, it also includes the preface to Phule's work *Gulamgiri*, written in 1873 and his 1882 memorial addressed to the education commission, both originally written in English. These writings are put together to form a corpus of Phule's writings on education. The author provides critical introductions to these translations and reproductions, apart from a general introductory note on Phule at the beginning of the book.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

12. Babachandra Singha

[Sustainable Energy at an Unsustainable Cost Tribal Land Alienation in Assam](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 07 February, 2026

Fossil fuels, being non-renewable, cannot be relied upon indefinitely, and their extensive use poses serious threats to the global environment, contributing to ecological imbalance. However, the shift from conventional sources of energy to sustainable energy has created a green energy paradox, evident in the Karbi Anglong hill district of Assam. While renewable energy initiatives aim for sustainability, they often lead to widespread land alienation for indigenous tribal communities. The pursuit of sustainable energy in Karbi Anglong comes at an unsustainable social and environmental cost, showcasing the resilience and resistance of the local population. Energy resources, particularly fossil fuels, have significantly shaped the development of human society. These non-recyclable fossil fuels are finite natural resources that will inevitably be exhausted. As fossil fuels continue to serve as the primary source of energy for modern civilisation, it is in the collective interest to understand the limits of their availability. Furthermore, their sustained use poses serious threats to the global environment (Afgan et al 1998). In response, the international community is increasingly turning to renewable energy sources to mitigate the risks of catastrophic climate change and promote sustainable development. India is also actively participating in this global transition.

FINANCE AND BANKING

13. Abhiman Das And Smita Roy Trivedi

[Cash and Cashless Dynamics of Indian Payment Systems](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 8, 21 February, 2026

While digital payments have surged in recent years, cash transactions continue to be important. Cash and digital payment trends are examined, and the factors that potentially drive payment method choices and the constraints faced by customers are explored. Transactional demand for currency is driven by personal choices, comfort, and trust, and may not stem from either education levels, income categories, technological awareness or age. Similarly, precautionary demand for currency is heightened in times of uncertainty. Keeping the nuances of currency use in mind is necessary before policy actions are taken on the circulation of currency. India pays digitally, yet hoards cash. As India goes digital, with 20 billion payments approximating ₹250 trillion through

digital modes of payment, cash transactions paradoxically have not declined (Malhotra 2025; RBI 2025). In 2024–25, even as retail digital payments marked an increase of 17.9% in value terms and 35% in volume, banknotes in circulation continued to grow robustly at 6% by value and 5.6% by volume. What drives the contours of this choice between cash and card (digital)? Should we nudge people towards cashless transactions? Will that matter for economic outcomes? Can cash and the cashless coexist in a vibrant payment system, as in a few developed countries such as Switzerland, Germany and Japan?

14. Rahul Menon

[Politics, Value, and the Theory of Money](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 8, 21 February, 2026

We are used to accounts that start from the need of a commodity to function as money, through the evolution of gold and silver coinage, with the banking system treated as a mere signpost on the journey to modern money. Kapadia foregrounds the main feature that is often abstracted from in discussions of money, namely the banking system. If money—either cash or bank accounts—can be thought of as the liability of a banking entity—cash being the liability of the central bank and bank accounts the liability of private banks—the credit nature of money is already thrust front and centre. The importance of this approach is to divest money of a simple materialistic explanation, and to see it as part of an institutional framework that has been moulded by state action. Credit and liabilities represent rights “... *to future physical control of commodities and value*” (p 8, italics in original), and hence the nature of money must be seen in temporal terms. The fact that credit claims can be built up before the exchange of goods and services, and that one individual’s credit claims are necessarily another’s debt, implies that all individuals are tied together in economic relationships beyond a simplistic dichotomy of “buyer” and “seller.” Kapadia uses the term “mutualization” to characterise the interlocking of credit relationships that underlie the monetary economy, each individual being locked in a society-wide balance sheet with others.

15. Laura Castillo-Martinez and Ricardo Reis

[How Do Central Banks Control Inflation? A Guide for The Perplexed](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

Central banks have a primary goal of price stability. They pursue it using tools that include the interest they pay on reserves, the size and the composition of their balance sheet, and the dividends they distribute to the fiscal authority. We describe the economic theories that justify the central bank's ability to control inflation and discuss their relative effectiveness in light of the historical record. We present alternative approaches as consistent with each other, as opposed to conflicting ideological camps. While interest-rate setting may often be superior, having both a monetarist pillar and fiscal support is essential, and at times pegging the exchange rate or monetizing the debt is inevitable.

16. Anders D. Jensen and Jonathan L. Weigel

[No Taxation without Administration: Bringing the State Back into the Public Finance of Developing Countries](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol.64, No.1, March 2026

The empirical economics literature on taxation in developing countries has centered on the importance of third-party information for enforcement. Yet, while surely a long-run objective, leveraging such information remains out of reach in many developing countries due to largely informal economies and low state capacity. This article examines an emerging complementary literature focused on strengthening the "sinews" of state capacity: tax administration. We argue that reforms to the organizational structure, personnel management, and task management of tax authorities have potential to raise tax capacity in developing countries. We also argue that efforts to improve the state's legitimacy—popular acceptance of its right to tax—can increase capacity and may complement investments in tax administration. Our approach bridges a long-standing divide between how scholars in public finance and political economy approach tax capacity building in developing countries.

17. Yueran Ma

[Chew, Donald H., Jr. The Making of Modern Corporate Finance: A History of the Ideas and How They Help Build the Wealth of Nations](#)

Journal Of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

Is American capitalism over the past 40 years a success story? To Donald Chew, the answer is an emphatic yes—this has been an age of tremendous progress. The making of modern corporate finance in the United States has transformed sprawling conglomerates into efficient enterprises,

turned managers away from building empires for themselves and toward creating value for their companies, and brought solutions to the age-old challenge of separating ownership from control. During this time, the United States has outperformed Europe and Japan in innovation, productivity, and growth. Chew's book is a thought-provoking treatise that invites readers to reflect on how the evolution of corporate finance fits into the broader evolution of economic activities in our society. Is modern corporate finance as described by Chew an engine of economic prosperity? What does it accomplish and what does it leave unresolved?

18. Robert Novy-Marx and Mihail Velikov

[Artificial Intelligence–Powered \(Finance\) Scholarship](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2026

This paper describes a process for generating academic papers using large language models (LLMs) and demonstrates this process's efficacy by producing hundreds of complete papers on stock return predictability, a topic well-suited for our illustration. After mining over 30,000 potential return predictors from accounting data, we generate template reports for 95 signals passing rigorous criteria from the Novy-Marx and Velikov (2024) Assaying Anomalies protocol. These templates detail signal performance predicting returns using a wide array of tests and benchmark performance against more than 200 documented anomalies. Finally, for each template we use state-of-the-art LLMs to generate multiple complete versions of academic papers with distinct theoretical justifications for the observed return predictability, incorporating citations to literature supporting their respective claims. This experiment illustrates the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) for enhancing financial research efficiency, but also serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating how it can be abused to industrialize hypothesizing after results are known (HARKing).

19. Renato Faccini, Seungcheol Lee, Ralph Luetticke, Morten O. Ravn and Tobias Renkin

[Financial Frictions: Micro versus Macro Volatility](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 116, No. 2, February 2026

We argue that consumer credit spreads matter for household choices and that time-varying spreads have important distributional consequences. Studying Danish household data, we show

that consumer credit spreads have heterogeneous impact on asset dynamics and consumption choices across the wealth distribution and that time-varying spreads induce a countercyclical marginal propensity to consume. We study a HANK model where banks provide consumer credit and corporate loans. Through countercyclical credit spreads, frictional finance amplifies aggregate shocks and induces consumption inequality. Economies with less leveraged banks experience reduced aggregate volatility but may face higher volatility and lower welfare at the household level.

20. Piotr Dworczak

[How to Allocate Money?](#)

American Economic Journals, Vol. 18, No. 1, February 2026

I study a simple equity-efficiency problem: A designer allocates a fixed amount of money to a population of agents differing in privately observed marginal values for money. She can only screen by imposing an "ordeal"—that is, by allocating more money to agents who engage in a socially wasteful activity (such as queuing or filling out forms). Giving a lump-sum transfer is outperformed by an ordeal mechanism when agents with the lowest money-denominated cost of engaging in the wasteful activity have an expected value for money that exceeds the average value by more than a factor of two.

21. James Graham And Robert A. McDowall

[Mental Accounts and Consumption Sensitivity across the Distribution of Liquid Assets](#)

American Economic Journals, VOL. 18, NO. 1 February, 2026

We study consumption spending responses to predictable income using household-level data from a US financial institution. Even for households with large liquid asset balances, we find no spending in anticipation of income receipt, substantial spending following receipt, and significant front-loading with respect to date of receipt. To rationalize these findings, we develop a tractable model of mental accounts where consumption choices are partitioned across current income and current assets. Our model reproduces the timing, magnitude, and cross-section of

consumption responses observed in the data. Finally, we use the model to study the effectiveness of targeted and untargeted fiscal stimulus policies.

22. Harald Uhlig And Taojun Xie

[Parallel Digital Currencies and Sticky Prices](#)

American Economic Journals, Vol. 18, No. 1, February 2026

The rise of digital currencies may result in domestic parallel currencies. Their exchange rate shocks present new challenges for monetary policy. We analyze these issues in a New Keynesian framework. Firms set prices in one of the currencies. A one-time appreciation of a parallel currency results in persistent redistributions toward the Dollar sector output and inflation. We calculate optimal monetary policy. When price stickiness is homogeneous, it is optimal to leave nominal interest rates unchanged. We compare optimal policy to three Taylor rules. Higher dollar price rigidity may lead to an increase rather than a decrease in the Dollar sector.

HEALTH

23. Sayani Das

[Widowhood, Social Participation, and Gender](#)

[A Moderated Mediation Model of Healthy Ageing among Indian Adults](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 9, 28 February, 2026

Widowhood is a major life-course transition with implications for health in later life. Using the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India, this paper examines the association between widowhood and healthy ageing, with social participation as a mediator and gender as a moderator. Among 64,335 adults aged 45+, widowhood was associated with poorer healthy ageing. Widowhood increased the likelihood of low social participation, which in turn reduced healthy ageing scores. This indirect pathway was significantly stronger among women than men, indicating pronounced gender disparities. These findings highlight the need for gender-responsive, socially supportive interventions to promote healthy ageing in India.

24. Dipti Govil, T V Sekher And Manish Lekhwani

[Assessing the Unmet Need for Healthcare among Older Adults in India](#)

[Evidence from a Nationwide Survey](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 9, 28 February, 2026

Using unit-level data from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India, we define unmet healthcare needs among older adults using various parameters. Seven indicators were computed to measure unmet needs based on healthcare visits and referrals, treatment of sensory organs, lack of treatment of diagnosed diseases and undiagnosed and undertreated hypertension/diabetes.

Unmet needs can be a critical indicator for assessing a healthcare system's performance, identifying barriers to healthcare and measuring healthcare inequalities (Rahman et al 2022; Coube et al 2023). An increasing number of studies indicate that despite advancements in medicine and related technologies, and improving policy focus, there remains a noticeable gap in identifying unmet healthcare needs, especially among the geriatric population. In this context, defining what unmet needs are becomes a basic prerequisite for addressing them (Allin et al 2010; Mahapatro et al 2021).

25. Hui Ding

[Geographic Variation in Mental Health Treatment Utilization: Evidence from Migration](#)

American Economic Journals, Vol. 18, No. 1, February 2026

The older population bears a heavy burden of mental illness. Despite the availability of effective treatments, including services (e.g., psychotherapy) and drugs (e.g., antidepressants, antipsychotics), this paper documents substantial geographic variation in treatment utilization rates among Medicare enrollees. Exploiting patient migration, I show that 45.8 percent of service utilization variation is attributable to place-specific factors, compared to 15.1 percent for drug utilization. Further analyses suggest the role of provider accessibility in explaining the different place effects between service and drug use. Regarding health outcomes, I find that higher treatment utilization is associated with lower risks of self-harm-related emergency department visits.

26. David Silver And Jonathan Zhang

[Invisible Wounds: How Mental Disability Benefits Shape Veteran Well-Being](#)

American Economic Journals, Vol.18, No.1, February 2026

We study impacts of VA disability compensation on the health and well-being of the large and rapidly growing population of veterans claiming mental disorders. We leverage quasi-random assignment of veterans to medical examiners with varying assessing tendencies. An additional

\$1,000 per year decreases food insecurity and homelessness by 4.1 and 1.3 percent over 5 years. Health care utilization increases, with greater engagement in preventive care. We estimate precise null average effects on health and mortality. Those on the margin of claim denial experience worse outcomes on average than other applicants, with suggestive evidence of large treatment effects for this subpopulation.

LAW AND SOCIETY

27. Rafique Khan

[Recipe for the Making of a Perpetual Accused: Exceptional Law and Normalised Incarceration](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 07 February, 2026

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act has institutionalized a regime of normalized incarceration through ordinary criminal process, producing what may be described as the figure of the “perpetual accused.” Through an examination of bail jurisprudence under Section 43D (5), the article demonstrates how statutory restrictions, judicial deference to prosecutorial narratives, and expansive interpretations of conspiracy have collectively inverted the presumption of innocence. The UAPA detention operates as de facto preventive detention without the constitutional safeguards traditionally associated with such measures, thereby hollowing out the guarantees of personal liberty under Article 21. The prolonged incarceration of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 marks a decisive inversion in the functioning of India’s criminal justice system, where deprivation of liberty increasingly precedes, rather than follows, adjudication of guilt. Both have spent more than five years in custody in connection with the 2020 Delhi riot conspiracy case without the conclusion of trial, rendering incarceration not a provisional procedural measure but the dominant experience of criminal process (*Indian Express* 2026; *Al Jazeera* 2026).

28. K C Mujeebu Rahman and Anindita Chakrabarti

[Muslim Personal Law, Inheritance, and Innovation: The Curious Case of Shukkur and Sheena’s Remarriage](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 14 February, 2026

After 29 years of marriage, a Muslim couple from Kasaragod remarried under the Special Marriage Act in 2023 to secure their daughters’ property rights, sparking public debate on Muslim

Personal Law and the Uniform Civil Code. Under Muslim law, daughters inherit only part of their father's property, with the remainder going to male relatives. The article examines the intersections of Muslim personal law, family, and property rights in Kerala. It traces how colonial legal legacies shaped Muslim entrepreneurial practices and social mobility. The succession strategies draw attention to a process of judicial harmonization between different legal orders—a key feature of state-enforced religion-based family law in India. During our research on Muslim entrepreneurship in Kerala, we came across the unusual remarriage story of Shukkur and Sheena. Both lawyers, the couple decided to remarry—not for romantic reasons, but for legal ones. Their first marriage was a *nikah* ceremony; therefore, in terms of succession under Islamic principles, their three daughters could only inherit two-thirds of their property, and the remainder would go to Shukkur's brothers.¹ To avoid this, they remarried under the Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954, which allowed them to write a will and ensure that their daughters inherit everything.² In India, religion-based personal laws that govern marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and succession are recognised under the country's constitutional provisions, ensuring religious freedom. At the same time, there is the provision for sidestepping religion-based laws if one gets married under the SMA.³ [Read more](#)

29. Syed Mohammed Nasif

[Performative Doctrinal Compliance: The Epistemological Bankruptcy of Indian Legal Academia](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 21 February, 2026

Indian legal scholarship operates as a self-referential system where academic articles appear in merely 0.65% of the Supreme Court judgments. Simultaneously, 94% of judicial citations reference foreign journals, and 88% of university-recommended Indian journals are predatory. Institutional pressures reward publication volume over empirical rigour, which confines scholars to textual analysis, leaving systemic discrimination, registry manipulation, and bail disparities unexamined. The discipline requires immediate reorientation towards courtroom ethnography and quantitative methods. The Indian legal academia is writing letters to a jurisprudential god that does not exist. When the seven-judge bench in *In Re: Interplay between Arbitration Agreements under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996 and the Indian Stamp Act 1899* (2024) overruled the *N N Global Mercantile (P) Ltd v Indo Unique Flame Ltd* (2023) judgment's doctrine less than a year after it was delivered, hundreds of scholarly papers analysing the "previous position" were rendered obsolete overnight. The Indian legal academic discipline has mutated into a closed loop that creates, validates, and consumes its own elements without any reference to external reality.

30. Debasis Barik, Neerad Deshmukh, Sharan Sharma and Sonale Desai

[The Trinity of Support: Negotiating Space and Care for Older Adults in a Transitioning Society](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 9, 28 February, 2026

Drawing on nationally representative data from two waves of the India Human Development Survey, this paper examines how family structures, functional health, work participation, and state support interact to shape the well-being of Indians aged 60 and above. We document a gradual decline in intergenerational co-residence, alongside rising proportions of older adults living alone or only with a spouse. While family remains the primary source of care and income support, the role of the state has significantly expanded through pensions and health insurance schemes. We argue that the emerging landscape of ageing in India rests on a shifting “trinity” of support—family, self, and the state—each of which must adapt to demographic and gender transformations to ensure secure and dignified ageing. Many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are undergoing rapid demographic transitions with declining mortality and fertility rates (Lee 2002). Consequently, there are fewer children available to care for ageing parents in these societies. Older adults thus face a dwindling support system, a reduction in the amount of support, and possibly a greater discontentment with their living arrangements (Knodel et al 1992). International experience suggests that this demographic transition has been accompanied by significant socio-economic changes where public transfers are often required to replace family support (Palloni 2001).

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

31. Shreya Roy, Bibek Ray Chaudhuri

[Artificial Intelligence, Demand Switching and Sectoral Wage Gap](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 9, 28 February, 2026

A finite-change general equilibrium framework models AI as a technological shock transmitted through price adjustments, showing that preference shifts towards AI services can widen wage gaps. Empirical validation using an endogenous structural break approach identifies 2007 as the year of AI’s introduction in India, coinciding with the emergence of services such as Windows Live and ride-hailing apps like Ola and Uber. It has been observed that wage inequality has not worsened significantly, owing to the slow adoption of AI-based services such as ride-hailing, used by less than 0.7% of the population. Artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, with their labor-

saving technology, have emerged as game changers in the economy. The IMF (2020) reports that incomes in developed and developing countries are diverging due to the increasing use of robotics in production processes. Greater substitutability between robots and labourers leads to wider income divergence. Within each category, workers whose tasks are complementary to robots stand to gain, while those whose tasks are substitutable are likely to lose. Shen and Zhang (2024) show that AI raises productivity by improving capital utilisation and labour division. Other researchers argue that AI will increase the demand for semi-skilled workers (Ernst et al 2018). However, several studies find that medium-skilled workers are likely to be replaced by technology (Autor and Salomons 2018; Bárány and Siegel 2018; Acemoglu and Autor 2011).

32. Tanja Ahlin

[Socio-technical Imaginaries of Social Robots for Older Adults.](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 9, 28 February, 2026

Although social robots are promoted as a technological solution for ageing populations, their development and integration are challenging. This paper analytically reviews social science research on social robots for elder care in two different socio-economic and political contexts, the Netherlands and India, focusing on socio-technical imaginaries in media, research, and policy. Grounded in science and technology studies, the notion of socio-technical imaginaries presumes the mutual shaping of technologies and people's imagination. However, socio-technical imaginations of states, roboticists and the intended robot users are not always aligned. Global digitalization trends in health and long-term care are shaped by a remarkably common storyline: that the combination of ageing populations and decreasing human and financial resources is leading to a care crisis. The number of people older than 60 years is projected to double from 1.1 billion in 2023 to 2.1 billion in 2025. This translates into 22% of the global population, with more than 80% living in low- and middle-income countries (WHO 2024). Simultaneously, WHO (2025) projects a shortfall of 11 million healthcare workers, mostly but not exclusively in low- and middle-income countries, due to chronic under-investment in education, employment, deployment, and retention of staff. Even in wealthy regions such as Europe, there is a shortage of healthcare workers, which WHO (2022) describes it as “the ticking time bomb,” as 40% of doctors are close to retirement, while the number of nurses is decreasing due to poor work conditions and post-pandemic mental health struggles.

33. Kanchan Gandhi and Anu Sablon

[Surveillance Society and the Impacts of Digital Governance Initiatives](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 07 February, 2026

The outcomes of digital governance initiatives in smart cities through the lens of three “smart” projects of Chandigarh are investigated. Deemed a planned utopia, Chandigarh is one of the most heavily surveilled cities in India. The panoptic city is used to surveil some groups of people more than others. Key decisions regarding the implementation of these schemes rest with urban administrators, planners and politicians. The city’s elite citizens find ways of getting their voices included in the urban arena. But the lack of public participation, particularly of the marginalized groups, deepens spatial and social inequality and increases discontent. We examine how these technologies, particularly surveillance urbanism, can transform infrastructure, services and social lives in cities and their peripheries. The data for this paper were collected through interviews with bureaucrats, residents, RWA leaders in Chandigarh and media reports. The “digital turn” in urbanism is fundamentally transforming the nature of urban life. Several scholars have investigated the material and social transformations brought about as a result of data-driven, algorithmic and smart city governance (Graham and Marvin 2001; Kitchin 2014; Paulo and Kitchin 2019). In the context of India, smart cities are supposed to bring order and efficiency in governance; sustainability and inclusivity through scalable area-based place-making projects; and citizen participation in planning and development. They also raise concerns about citizen privacy and safety emanating from the increased surveillance techniques deployed for governance. In this paper, we investigate the outcomes of these digital initiatives in the smart city projects of Chandigarh and make broader connections to other cities in India while also addressing the questions of “Who plans? And who controls the access to data?” while seeking to understand what a mission like the smart city initiative could add to the planned modernist city of Chandigarh, and how digital governance technologies have transformed infrastructure, services and social life in the city. What has the area-based approach for digitalization meant for certain neighborhoods and people in the city?

34. Robert Novy-Marx and Mihail Velikov

[Artificial Intelligence–Powered \(Finance\) Scholarship](#)

Journal of Economic Literature, vol. 64, no. 1, March 2026

This paper describes a process for generating academic papers using large language models (LLMs) and demonstrates this process's efficacy by producing hundreds of complete papers on

stock return predictability, a topic well-suited for our illustration. After mining over 30,000 potential return predictors from accounting data, we generate template reports for 95 signals passing rigorous criteria from the Novy-Marx and Velikov (2024) Assaying Anomalies protocol. These templates detail signal performance predicting returns using a wide array of tests and benchmark performance against more than 200 documented anomalies. Finally, for each template we use state-of-the-art LLMs to generate multiple complete versions of academic papers with distinct theoretical justifications for the observed return predictability, incorporating citations to literature supporting their respective claims. This experiment illustrates the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) for enhancing financial research efficiency, but also serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating how it can be abused to industrialize hypothesizing after results are known.

RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

35. Basit Abdullah, Satyaki Dasgupta and Kashif Mansoor

[Decoding the Surge in Rural Employment](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 10, 07 March, 2026

The increase in the rural workforce during and after the lockdown was primarily driven by women entering self-employment in agriculture, where earnings remain significantly low. The movement from casual work to self-employment in the agricultural sector also underlines a larger shift in dynamics in rural areas, arguably exacerbated by the pandemic. The non-manufacturing sector, most importantly the construction sector, absorbed men in the post-pandemic situation, but the same shift is not observed among women. The *Economic Survey 2022–23* highlights the current government's focus on rural development, which aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas by targeting equitable development, increasing the income of rural households, and reducing migration and indebtedness. With about 65% of the country's population living in rural areas and 47% dependent on the agricultural sector, a focus on rural development is necessary. However, the agricultural situation in India represented a situation of agrarian distress for about two decades (Ramakumar 2020). This is largely caused by the high cost of cultivation of crops, dominance of intermediaries in the output market, and price fluctuations in the global market (Mishra 2020). The share of agriculture in total gross domestic product (GDP) has declined much more sharply than its share in total employment, implying that the corresponding increase in the share of industry and service sectors in GDP has not absorbed labour adequately (Jha and Kumar 2020).

36. Ashok Kumar and Sanjeev Vidyarthi

[Urban Planning in Contemporary India Myriad Approaches in Parallel Play](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 07 February, 2026

What fundamental influences are critical to understanding the nature and orientation of planning practice in contemporary India? This paper tracks four approaches that are posited as foundationally elemental to comprehend the origin and long-term development of India's urban planning. They also help make sense of persistent urban challenges and freshly emergent perspectives in the field. Echoing the colonial origins of modern city planning in India, imperial architects and military engineers dominated the opening acts. They considered city planning a design-centric cartographic activity aiding economic extraction and social segregation. Town planning and betterment schemes sponsored by urban improvement trusts (UIT) and municipalities as well as new urban extensions sponsored by the central and state public works departments (PWD) stand out as prominent examples showcasing this approach (King 1976; Legg 2007). But coming to the fore in the 20th century, the comprehensive rational planning (CRP) approach remains the predominant paradigm of planning practice and education worldwide (Baum 1996, 2015; Sandercock 1998; Flyvbjerg 1998). Taylor (1999: 332), for example, conceives CRP as “an ‘ideal-type’ conception of planning as a procedure for making rational decisions.” A rational planner is “normally taken to be someone who emphasises logical capacities and can give reasons for a particular view”

37. Keshab Das, Sheema Fatima, Kanchan Gandhi and Ashima Sood

[Locating Urban Knowledge](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 6, 07 February, 2026

Much like the fields of law, management, policy, design and architecture, which remain informed by applied social sciences in both practice and research, urban planning in India has its cross-disciplinary cognate in urban studies. The relationship has been ambivalent and sometimes conflicted (Vidyarthi et al 2012). Arriving at or often speaking to similar problematics of inclusion, sustainability and even practicality with respect to land, resource access and allocation of space, urban practice across planning and policy domains has often disavowed the critical traditions that shape the field of urban studies (Chatterji and Soni 2016). In particular, as a professional arena of practice, urban planning has tended to neglect the vast “informal” systems across housing, retail, waste, transport and even climate change that undergird urban “people” as infrastructure in India (Simone 2014; Hussain et al 2024). Planned and unplanned solutions to “wicked” urban problems often generate new problems in their wake. The demands of a fast-urbanizing global

population, with vast numbers housed in small and medium settlements, therefore require interdisciplinary expertise to address the complex and ever-changing fields that intersect in sites of economic and social agglomeration. A diverse array of academic disciplines and fields of expert practice speak to the urban conundrum. The interdisciplinary field of urban studies itself draws from variegated bodies of knowledge in disciplines, such as geography, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and even sciences, including civil engineering and information and communication technologies. Nevertheless, processes of urban planning and policy in many contexts continue to be shaped by far narrower disciplinary knowledge bases. Certain kinds of conventional expert positions and technocratic bodies of knowledge have tended to dominate urban policy processes (Sood 2024). Urban planning educators in India and elsewhere have been well cognisant of the shortcomings in the curriculum (Kumar et al 2016).

WATER RESOURCES

38. Shiuli Vanaja, Niruj Deka and Dona Maria John

[Piped Water Policy in Rural India](#)

EPW, Vol. 61, Issue No. 7, 14 February, 2026

The Jal Jeevan Mission, launched in August 2019, aims to provide in-house piped water to all rural households. It claims that about 77% of rural households have piped water connections, up from 17% at the beginning of the scheme. However, comparisons with the National Family Health Survey data reveal discrepancies at both the district and state levels. More ground-level information is required to evaluate the success of the scheme. Access to safe drinking water at home is a problem for many households in rural India, like some other countries in South Asia and Africa. In the absence of a safe water supply at home, people often use public water sources available in the community, such as wells, hand pumps, rivers, and lakes. Without in-house water access, family members have to travel outside their homes to fetch water, which entails time costs. If people drink unsafe water from different water sources available in the community, they might fall sick with waterborne diseases and bear associated health costs. The time and health costs associated with a lack of safe drinking water at home might lead to the diversion of resources from other, more productive uses of time and money for people.