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CONSUMER CONFIDENCE SURVEY



According to the latest Consumer Confidence Survey of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Indian consumers' confidence about general economic situation, employment scenario, their income and spending have weakened.

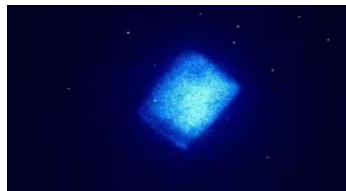
- It is a survey that indicates how **optimistic or pessimistic consumers** are regarding their expected financial situation.
- If the consumers are optimistic, spending will be more, whereas if they are not so confident, then their poor consumption pattern may lead to recession
- It is released by the **Reserve Bank of India bi-monthly**.
- Indicators of consumer confidence survey:
 - **Current Situation Index (CSI)**
 - **Future Expectation Index (FEI)**

Highlights:

- Households displayed somewhat higher optimism on one year ahead outlook for major economic parameters, except prices.
 - The future expectations index (FEI) improved by 0.5 points to 121.9 in the latest survey.
 - The CCS survey showed that households anticipated **higher spending over one year** horizon on the back of higher essential as well as non-essential spending
 - Consumer confidence for the current period declined marginally owing to weaker sentiments across the survey parameters except household spending.
 - The **current situation index** (CSI) moderated by 0.7 points to 94 in November 2024 from 94.7 in September 2024.
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RADIOACTIVE DIAMOND BATTERY



Scientists from the University of Bristol and the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) have created the world's first carbon-14 diamond battery.

- It is a carbon-14 diamond battery, a strange fusion of radioactive decay, synthetic diamonds and plasma chemistry.
- It uses **carbon-14**, a radioactive isotope of carbon of half-life of 5,700, because it emits a short-range radiation, quickly absorbed by any solid material.
- It functions similarly to solar panels but instead of using light particles, **it captures fast-moving electrons from within the diamond structure.**

Applications:

- It can prove **particularly helpful in healthcare** where it can be used to **power pacemakers, hearing aids, and ocular devices.** Patients won't need to replace batteries as the diamond battery can last for years.
- The battery could also be used in **extreme environments** – both in space and on earth – where it is not practical to replace conventional batteries.
- They can also prove to be of great **help in space missions** without worrying about the power to replace or charge the power source of spacecrafts.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION TAGGED PRODUCTS



- **Adi Kekir Ginger:**

- It is grown in the Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh and cultivated by the Adi tribe.

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- This aromatic ginger is **renowned for its medicinal properties**, aiding in everything from digestive issues to menstrual pain.
- **Dalle Khursani:**
 - It is a **fiery red pepper grown in Sikkim** that has earned fame far beyond the borders of India.
 - It is grown in **protected organic conditions**; this pepper is revered for its pungency, used in **local pickles and pastes**, and even celebrated for its **medicinal properties**.
 - Over 5,000 local families rely on it for their livelihoods.
- **Naga King Chilli or Raja Mircha:**
 - It is grown in Nagaland and it is one of the **hottest chilies in the world**.
 - It also represents the deep connection the Naga people have to their land and cultural heritage.
 - Cultivated with care by around 100 families, this fiery chili **thrives in the high-altitude, humid climate of Nagaland**, producing fruit that's packed with both heat and flavor.
 - The chili plays an integral part in Naga cuisine, adding spice and depth to traditional dishes.
- **Kaji Nimu:**
 - It is a **distinctive variety of lemon** celebrated for its size, aroma, and sharp tang, reflects the state's rich agricultural heritage.
 - Larger and more flavorful than most other lemon varieties, the Kaji Nimu is an essential ingredient in **Assamese cuisine** and traditional remedies.

CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH AWARD



- It was **established in 2005** and awarded by the United

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Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

- It is the UN's **highest environmental honour**, recognises trailblazers at the forefront of efforts to protect people and the planet.
- Every year, UNEP honours **individuals and organizations** working on **innovative and sustainable solutions** to address the triple planetary crisis of **climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste**.
- Champions of the Earth are celebrated in **four categories**:
 - **Policy leadership**- Public sector officials leading global or national action for the environment. They shape dialogue, lead commitments and act for the good of the planet.
 - **Inspiration and action**- Leaders taking bold steps to inspire positive change to protect our world. They lead by example, challenge behavior and inspire millions.
 - **Entrepreneurial vision** -Visionaries challenging the status quo to build a cleaner future. They build systems, create new technology and spearhead a groundbreaking vision.
 - **Science and innovation**-Trailblazers pushing the boundaries of technology for profound environmental benefit. They invent possibilities for a more sustainable world.

WHAT IS AGEXTEND?



Researchers at IIIT-Delhi have developed AgeXtend, an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered platform designed to discover molecules that could slow down ageing and promote healthier lives.

- It is an **Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered platform** designed to **discover molecules that could slow down ageing** and promote healthier lives.
- It was **developed** by researchers at the **Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIIT-Delhi)**.

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- AgeXtend utilises bioactivity data from existing geroprotectors-substances that slow ageing-to predict new molecules with similar properties.
- Its AI modules evaluate geroprotective potential, assess toxicity, and identify target proteins and mechanisms of action, ensuring both accuracy and safety in the discovery process.
- The researchers tested AgeXtend by excluding well-known compounds like metformin and taurine, molecules already known to extend lifespan, and found that the platform could still predict their benefits.
- AgeXtend also screened more than 1.1 billion compounds and identified promising candidates validated through experiments on yeast, Caenorhabditis elegans (a nematode), and human cell models.
- The research also explored AgeXtend's ability to analyze natural compounds found in the human microbiome, tiny organisms living in our bodies, and their role in controlling cell ageing.

CESSES AND SURCHARGES



Arvind Panagariya, Chairman, 16th Finance Commission, recently termed the grievance of States regarding the Centre's increasing reliance on cesses and surcharges as a "complicated issue."

- Cess and surcharges are levied by the Central government for the purposes of the Union under Article 271 of the Constitution of India.
- A cess is a tax on tax. The Indian government levies it on the tax liability, including surcharge, and it is used for a specific purpose.
- Cesses are named after the identified purpose; the purpose itself must be certain and for the public good.

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- Some different types of cesses levied in India are: **infrastructure cess** on motor vehicles, **Krishi Kalyan cess** on service value, **Swachh Bharat cess**, **Education cess** and **Cess on crude oil** among others.
- On the other hand, a **surcharge is charged on the income taxes paid**. It is usually **paid by taxpayers** including individuals, associations of persons, or companies, **who fall in a particular tax bracket**.
 - **Surcharge is not collected for any specific purpose** but can be used for any reason as seen reasonable by the Central government.
- The **proceeds collected from surcharge and cess** levied by the Union form part of the **Consolidated Fund of India**.
 - The funds need **not be shared with the State governments** and are thus at the **exclusive disposal of the Union government**.
 - The proceeds of such surcharges and cesses go towards meeting **certain specific needs**, such as financing of centrally sponsored schemes.
 - The benefit of such expenditure also percolates to the States.

INDIA SKILLS REPORT 2025



India's employability among graduates is expected to rise by 7 percent, reaching 54.81 percent in 2025, according to the 'India Skills Report 2025.'

- It has been prepared by the industry body **Confederation of Indian Industries (CII)** in collaboration with **Wheebox (a talent assessment agency)** and **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**.
- It is based on data from over 6.5 lakh candidates who participated in the **Global Employability Test (G.E.T.)** across India, alongside insights from over 1,000 corporations across 15 diverse industries.
- **Highlights of the Report:**

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- Nearly **55 percent of Indian graduates** are expected to be **globally employable in 2025**, up from 51.2 percent in 2024 (a seven percent increase).
- It notes that **management graduates** (78 percent) have **highest global employability**, followed by **engineering students** (71.5 percent), **MCA students** (71 percent) and **science graduates** (58 percent).
- States like **Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Delhi** are emerging as **major hubs for employable talent**, while cities such as **Pune, Bengaluru and Mumbai** are **leading the way in providing a skilled workforce**.
- Gender analysis shows that the **employability rate for men** is expected to **rise to 5 percent in 2025** from 51.8 percent in 2024.
- Meanwhile, for **women**, the **employability rate** is projected to **decline to 47.5 percent** from 50.9 percent during the same time period.
- In 2025, 50 percent of secondary and tertiary students are expected to receive vocational training, further positioning India as a key player in the global talent market.
- The report further stresses the importance of integrating vocational training with industry needs, particularly in emerging sectors such as AI, cybersecurity, and green energy.

WHO WAS CHINNASWAMI SUBRAMANIA BHARATI?



- He was a **poet, freedom fighter, and social reformer** from **Tamil Nadu**.
- He was known as **Mahakavi Bharathiyar**.
- He is considered **one of India's greatest poets**. His songs on nationalism and freedom of India helped to rally the masses to support the Indian Independence Movement in Tamil Nadu.
- He was born in Ettayapuram in 1882 and died in Madras in 1921.
- Bharathi joined as **Assistant Editor of the Swadesamitran, a Tamil daily**, in 1904.

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- In 1907, he started editing the Tamil weekly 'India' and the English newspaper 'Bala Bharatham' with M.P.T. Acharya.
- He assisted Aurobindo in the Arya journal and later Karma Yogi in Pondicherry.
- Unfortunately, Bharati was persecuted for his convictions both by the British and by the orthodox elements of his own society, who treated him as an outcast.
 - He was exiled from British India in 1908 and went to live in Pondicherry, a French colony in South India.
 - He spent ten years in exile there and eventually returned to Madras, where he died.
- Most of his compositions are classifiable as short lyrical outpourings on patriotic, devotional, and mystic themes.
- Bharathi was essentially a lyrical poet. Bharati's best-known works included Kannan pattu (Songs to Krishna) in 1917, Panchali sapatham (Panchali's Vow) in 1912, and Kuyil pattu (Kuyil's Song) in 1912.
- He also translated Vedic hymns, Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and Bhagavat Gita into Tamil.

FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE ROSE DURING 2017-18 TO 2022-23

What is LFPR?

- According to the CMIE, the labour force consists of persons who are of age 15 years or older, and belong to either of the following two categories:
 - Employed
 - Unemployed and are willing to work and are actively looking for a job
- There is a crucial commonality between the two categories — they both have people "demanding" jobs. This demand is what Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) refers to.

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Government Initiatives Supporting Women's Employment:

- The report highlights several government schemes aimed at empowering women and boosting female LFPR:
 - **Mudra Loans:** Provides financial assistance to women entrepreneurs.
 - **Drone Didi Scheme:** Focuses on skill development for women in emerging technologies like drones.
 - **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana:** Promotes women-led development through self-help groups.
- While the initiatives have played a role in supporting women's participation in the workforce, the paper calls for more rigorous research to evaluate their long-term impact.

Criticism:

- Critics have pointed out that much of the increase in female LFPR has been attributed to unpaid family work.
- However, the paper counters this by emphasizing that the overall trend remains positive even when unpaid work is excluded.
- The study also notes the need for future research to assess how government schemes have influenced this rise.

Conclusion:

- The rise in female LFPR between 2017-18 and 2022-23 marks a significant shift in women's employment in India, particularly in rural areas.
 - However, challenges like regional disparities, lower participation among married women, and the need for sustainable, paid employment opportunities persist.
 - Policymakers must focus on targeted interventions and better implementation of women-centric schemes to ensure sustained growth in female workforce participation.
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