

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-20

The Ministry of Education released the latest All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for 2021-22, covering all higher education institutions in India. AISHE has been conducted annually since 2011.

Increase in Overall Enrolment

The total enrolment in higher education has grown to nearly 4.33 crore in 2021-22, increasing by over 91 lakh students since 2014-15. This highlights the rapid expansion of India's higher education system over the years.

Rise in Enrolment Across Categories

Enrolment has increased across categories like females, SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities since 2014-15. For instance, female enrolment rose by 50 lakh to 2.07 crore.

Jump in GER Ratio

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), or percentage of 18-23 age group enrolled in higher education, has gone up from 23.7% in 2014-15 to 28.4% in 2021-22. The rise has been higher for females and reserved categories like SCs and STs.

Increase in Ph.D Enrolment

Ph.D enrolment increased 81.2% since 2014-15 to 2.12 lakh. Female Ph.D enrolment doubled in the same period highlighting greater gender parity in research degrees.

Predominance of Undergraduate Degrees

Nearly 79% of total enrolment is in undergraduate programs while 12% is in postgraduation. Arts, Science and Commerce remain the top disciplines at UG level.

Social Sciences Dominate Postgraduation

At postgraduate level, maximum students opt for Social Sciences followed by Science. This indicates the diversity of subject choices in higher studies.

STEM Enrolment Trends

Around 98.5 lakh students are pursuing STEM degrees in UG, PG and Ph.D levels in 2021-22, registering an increase over previous years.

Infrastructure Availability

As per collected data, higher education institutions have near universal availability of key infrastructure like libraries, labs, computer centers, playgrounds etc.

Number of Institutions

The total number of universities, colleges and standalone institutions registered under AISHE now stands at 1168, 45473 and 12002 respectively. Over 340 new universities have been added since 2014-15 highlighting expansion.

Faculty Details

The higher education system had nearly 16 lakh faculty in 2021-22 with 57% male and 43% female. The percentage of female faculty has grown by 22% since 2014-15 indicating improving gender balance.

SC CONCERNED OVER ED-STATES DISPUTES



The Supreme Court expressed concern over growing disputes between central agencies like Directorate of Enforcement (ED) and state governments during probes, impacting federalism. It sought an impartial mechanism.

Case Details

The court was hearing the ED plea to transfer a bribery probe against its officer by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) to CBI. ED claimed non-cooperation by state police in sharing FIRs and evidence.

Need for Fair Probes

The SC bench observed that while offenders shouldn't go free, vindictive arrests and witch-hunts are also unacceptable. Fair and transparent probes are required from both central and state agencies.

Proposing Pan-India Mechanism

Seeking to address the larger issue beyond the immediate case, the SC proposed evolving a mechanism that can apply across India for probes involving centre-state disputes to ensure impartiality.

The proposed mechanism can provide for joint probes teams, with officers from both sides, supervised by retired judges/officials. This can enhance cooperation, eliminate apprehensions and prevent abusive arrests.

Upholding Federal Spirit

The judges noted that with different ruling parties at the state and centre, federal structure is being threatened during high profile probes against state leaders. Impartial methods uphold federalism.

Checking Abuse of Authority

The SC said statutory powers of agencies like ED, CBI should not enable political vendetta or witch-hunts. Simultaneously, the corrupt can't be shielded citing federalism either.

Transparent functioning by probe agencies and monitoring by courts can balance effective law enforcement and prevention of harassment and vindictive arrests during inter-governmental investigations.

Way Forward

The apex court has asked the central and Tamil Nadu governments to jointly suggest an impartial mechanism that can apply for ED, CBI and state agency probes where cooperative

Over 1100 Personnel Receive Gallantry, Service Medals

The Ministry of Home Affairs announced Gallantry and Service medals for 1132 personnel across police, fire, civil defense and correctional services ahead of India's 75th Republic Day celebrations. The awards recognize brave and distinguished service to the nation.





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Categories of Awards

The awards are classified into 4 categories – President’s Medal for Gallantry, Medal for Gallantry, President’s Medal for Distinguished Service and Medal for Meritorious Service. Together they honor acts of bravery in the line of duty as well as valuable service upholding security and public safety. The categorization aims to streamline the recognition process focused on core areas.

Number of Gallantry Medals Awarded

277 personnel have been honored with Gallantry Medals, consisting of 2 President’s Medal for Gallantry and 275 Medal for Gallantry awards. They mark rare or conspicuous acts of courage undertaken during duties, often risking one’s own life.

Regional Distribution of Awards

The Gallantry Medals recipients largely hail from left-wing extremism hit states (119 awardees) and Jammu and Kashmir (133 awardees) alongside some awardees from other parts of India, recognizing personnel tackling security challenges across regions.

Range of Services Represented

The 277 Gallantry medals represent services ranging from state police forces and Central Armed Police Forces to border guarding forces like the SSB and BSF, including some posthumous awards to personnel martyred in the line of duty.

Number of Distinguished Service Medals

102 President’s Medal for Distinguished Service have been announced to recognize remarkable service records of police and fire service officials going beyond the call of duty to uphold law and public order.

Number of Meritorious Service Medals

753 personnel from police, fire, civil defense/home guards and prisons have been awarded Medal for Meritorious Service for committed service to society, showing grit, initiative and selflessness.

Significance of the Awards

The 2024 Republic Day Gallantry and Service medals highlight personnel tackling tough law and order environments, risky operations and challenging duties with courage and dedication, upholding security, safety and stability across India.

Odisha's Black Tiger Safari



Recently, Odisha announced the world's first exclusive melanistic tiger safari adjoining the Similipal Tiger Reserve. The aim is to boost tourism and allow better research and public viewing access to these rare tigers that are hard to sight in forests.

What are Black Tigers?

Black tigers are regular Bengal tigers with increased melanin production, giving them dark stripes instead of the typical orange and black pattern. They are known as pseudo-melanistic tigers and found only in Odisha's Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) currently.

First Sighting and Records

The first official sighting of black tigers in Similipal was by forest officials in 1975-1976. Later in 1993, the first melanistic tiger was killed in self-defense leading to scientific documentation. Research suggests the STR tigers likely descended from a small isolated population.

Current Population

As per 2022 data, there are an estimated 10 pseudomelanistic tigers out of the 16 tigers in STR. Odisha's ongoing tiger census indicates the STR population could be more than current estimates.

Safari Plan and Location

The Odisha government has identified a 200 hectare site along National Highway 18, about 15 kms from Similipal reserve. 100 hectares will house enclosures and facilities while 100 hectares will have visitor zones and veterinary centers.

Initially, 3 pseudomelanistic tigers from Nandankanan zoo and unfit rescued tigers will be housed. The numbers will be increased through breeding and more rescues subsequently.

In-Principle Approvals Received

The National Tiger Conservation Authority has given in-principle approval for the safari. A detailed site feasibility study will be done before final approvals. Other clearances like from Central Zoo Authority will also be needed.

Target Launch and Final Approvals

The state government aims to launch the unique melanistic tiger safari by October 2024 after all final approvals and construction are completed on the identified site near the Similipal reserve forests.

Concerns Among Activists

Some activists argue captive tigers lose natural behaviors compared to wild tigers. But others counter that controlled tourism may ultimately benefit conservation efforts, while visitors get to safely see the rare black tigers.

People's Democratic Party Wins Bhutan Elections



On January 10th, the Election Commission declared the People's Democratic Party (PDP) the winner with 30 out of 47 seats. The Bhutan Tendrel Party became the opposition party with 17 seats. This was the fourth National Assembly election since democratization.

Voter turnout reduced to 63% and 65.6% for the two rounds, from 66.36% and 71.46% in 2018.

Electoral System

Bhutan transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy in 2008. The bicameral parliament comprises the National Council (upper house) and National Assembly (lower house). National Assembly elections follow a two-round voting system – a primary round with all parties, and a general election between the top two.

Party Campaign Focus

The PDP focused on economic recovery through infrastructure development and private sector growth in its campaign. The new Bhutan Tendrel Party ran on vibrant governance, local empowerment and innovation.

Key Concerns

The main issues were the economic slowdown, high unemployment of 28.6%, stagnant tourism and private sector post-pandemic. Total debt levels stood at over 120% of GDP. Foreign reserves

were declining, hampering imports. Decreasing fertility rates and high migration also posed demographic challenges.

PDP to Lead Government Again

With a caretaker administration currently, the election marks a smooth democratic transition. The PDP's strong economic track record from 2013-18 has led to renewed public trust in its leadership under President Tshering Tobgay to tackle pressing challenges.

Policy Priorities Ahead

Having won a second term, the PDP government will focus on urgent economic, unemployment and debt issues through private sector growth, tourism revival and development projects. Tackling demographic changes will also be imperative.

India-Bhutan Ties

The election results are positive for India-Bhutan bilateral relations. The PDP has traditionally maintained close ties with India and promoted hydropower cooperation. Its victory signals continuity in this critical relationship.

14 High Risk Zones Identified in Joshimath

The Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) has identified 14 high risk zones in Joshimath after a detailed survey. These zones with severe land subsidence include houses in the Marwari, Sunil, Upper Bazar, Lower Bazar, Singhdhar and Manohar Bagh areas. Residing in these high risk houses poses major safety risks. Around 1,000 residential and commercial structures fall in these high risk zones.



Cracks Not Widened

Positively, the survey found that the cracks and subsidence reported last year have not widened or deepened over the past six months. However, the identified areas remain highly dangerous for habitation.

Relocation Options

CBRI has proposed two options for residents of the 14 high risk zones. They can either take compensation or relocate to a newly developed smart village with modern amenities and

facilities. CBRI will provide full support to the state government in building an ideal new village.

Resident Concerns

When state disaster management authorities explained the situation and options to affected Joshimath residents, they protested the proposal. Residents said their livelihoods depend on Joshimath's location and they prefer relocation to additional land within town rather than a new village far away.

Joshimath's Importance

Located in Chamoli district, Joshimath, also referred to as Jyotirmath, is an important Himalayan tourist and pilgrimage gateway town. Perched at an altitude of 6,150 feet (1,875 meters) above sea level, Joshimath serves as a crucial launching point for many Himalayan mountain climbing ventures, trekking routes, and important Hindu pilgrimage sites like Badrinath. Additionally, Joshimath houses one of the four sacred cardinal mathas founded by the Hindu spiritual leader Adi Shankaracharya. Its strategic location in the Himalayas has thus established Joshimath as a vital hub for adventure tourism and religious travel.

Zoning of Risk

Authorities have demarcated Joshimath into severe, medium and low land subsidence risk zones. One third area lies under serious threat. All options will be discussed with the central government before finalizing relocation plans.

Rejection of New Site

The proposed relocation site in Gauchar, over 90 kms from Joshimath, has been rejected by the Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, alleging inadequate public consultation. Residents want alternate land within Joshimath for relocation.

Cracks and Fissures

Large dangerous cracks and fissures had appeared across buildings and ground in January 2023 due to subsidence. This led to evacuation of many families to temporary relief camps and shelters.



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Ongoing Discussions

While the identified high risk zones remain dangerously uninhabitable, discussions around relocation options, resident concerns, livelihood impacts, and rehabilitation packages are still underway between authorities and affected Joshimath residents.

Safety First

Nevertheless, the safety of Joshimath residents remains the foremost priority. Difficult decisions may need to be taken even if it means residents moving away from Joshimath to protect their lives from future subsidence disasters.

