

December 17th news:

International:

WHO certifies Gabon as polio free

The World Health Organisation has declared Gabon a "polio-free country", given the lack of new reported or suspected cases in the central African country. According to a WHO statement obtained on 16th December, the UN health agency nonetheless recommended taking the necessary steps to continue monitoring for possible signs of the disease.

Cases of polio have decreased by 99 per cent since 1988, when polio was endemic in 125 countries and 350,000 cases were recorded worldwide. Now the disease is endemic only in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the WHO recorded four cases this year -- two in each country. Last year, there were 37 cases globally.

Indian diaspora is largest in the world, US remains top destination for migrants

The Indian diaspora is the largest in the world, with over 15 million migrants from India living abroad, according to the World Migration Report 2018 published by the International Organisation for Migration, the United Nations migration agency. Because the country has the largest number of migrants abroad, India also receives the highest amount in remittances (\$68.91 billion). The largest migration corridor is from India to UAE, where 3.5 million Indians were residing in 2015.

National:

Meghalaya launches Indias first social audit law

Meghalaya became the first state in the country to operationalize The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017, a law that makes a social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice. It was launched by Chief Minister Mukul Sangma at a national convention in Shillong. The law makes social audits part of the system as earlier it was civil society initiative rather than government-mandated.

President of India Lays Foundation Stone of NYAYA GRAM Project

The President of India Ram Nath Kovind, laid the foundation stone of the 'Nyaya Gram project' of the High Court of Allahabad in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. This judicial academy will make a significant contribution to the capacity of the lower judiciary in Uttar Pradesh. As per the President, the Nyaya Gram project would prove to be a milestone in fulfilling the requirements of the Allahabad High Court.

PM Dedicates Tuirial Hydropower Project to the Nation

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 60-megawatt Tuirial hydroelectric power project from Aizawl, Mizoram.

Mizoram had become the third power-surplus state in the north-east after Sikkim and Tripura. The hydropower project would produce "251 million units" of electrical energy every year. The Tuirial project, which was announced and cleared in 1998 by the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. It was the first major central project to be successfully commissioned in Mizoram. Prime Minister also inaugurated the Shillong - Nongstoin Rongjeng Tura road.

Economy:

Income Inequality Highest in India Since 1980s, Finds New Report

Income inequality has reached historically high levels in India since the 1980s when economic and trade liberalization began in the country, with the top ten percent of the population accounting for 56% of the national income in 2014, says a new report on income inequality across the world by the World Inequality Lab.

The report gives credence to the theory that the opening up of the economy has disproportionately benefited those at the top of the income pyramid. The report further says that the top one percent of the population accounted for as much as 22% of the country's total income in 2014.

Also, the absolute growth in income of the top one percent of the population since the 1980s has been more than that of the bottom 50% people taken together, according to the report. The report was coordinated by economists Thomas Piketty, Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman.

According to the report, inequality within the top ten percent group was also high. The higher up the Indian income distribution one looks, the faster the rise in their share of the national income has been since the early 1980s.

The income share of India's top one percent rose from nearly six percent in 1982-1983 to above ten percent a decade after, then to 15% by 2000, and further still to around 23% by 2014, says the report.

During the first decade after the millennium, the share of national income attributable to the top one percent grew to be larger than that pertaining to the bottom 50%.

By 2014, the national income share of the bottom 50%, a group of about 390 million adults, was just two-thirds of the share of the top one percent, who totalled at 7.8 million.

According to the report, an even stronger increase in the share of national income was experienced by the top 0.1% and the top 0.01%, whose shares grew fivefold and tenfold, respectively, from 2% and 0.5% to almost 10% and 5%, between 1983 and 2014. Income growth rates at the very top were extreme.

These evolutions are consistent with the dynamics of Indian wealth inequality, which exhibits a strong increase in the top ten percent wealth share in the recent period, in particular after 2002.

Highly unequal income growth at the top mechanically drives wealth inequality across the population, which in returns fuels income concentration, the report says.

In contrast, the annual real incomes of the bottom 50% grew at a faster rate than the countrywide average during the 1960s and 1970s when socialist central planning dominated the Indian economy, and at a notably higher pace than the growth experienced by those in the top ten percent and the top one percent of earners.

However, this dynamic changed dramatically during the 1980s and has remained the same ever since. The 1980s saw a much higher average income growth rates than in the previous decades, but growth was only marginally higher for the bottom 90% of the population. High growth was in fact concentrated among the top ten percent. This situation was prolonged throughout the 1980-2000s.

During the 2000s, the annual real income growth of the top one percent was close to 8.5%, followed by the top ten percent at around seven percent and the bottom 50% at less than 2.5%. India's countrywide average was 4.5% over the decade.

It is particularly interesting to compare the pre-1980 with the post-1980 growth rates. From 1980 to 2014, the bottom 50% and middle 40% grew at 89% and 93% respectively.

While the average income growth was substantially higher after 1980, there is very little difference in growth rates for the bottom 50% and middle 40%.

Since 1980, the top 0.1% earners captured more of the total growth than the bottom 50% (12% vs 11% of total growth). The top 0.1% of earners represented less than 800,000 individuals in 2014.

This is equivalent to a population smaller to Delhi's IT suburb, Gurgaon. It is a sharp contrast with the 389 million individuals that made up the bottom half of the adult population in 2014.

At the opposite end of the distribution, the top one percent of Indian earners captured as much growth as the bottom 84%.

In 2014, the bottom 50% earned significantly less than the average income per adult, receiving less than one-third of the nationwide mean income before tax, while the average income of the middle 40% was around four-fifths the national average.

Those in the top ten percent earned five times the national average, and when one examines further up the income distribution, the same exponential trend is evident, says the report.

GST Council decides to implement uniform system of e-way bill

The Uniform System of e-way Bill for inter-State as well as intra-State movement of good will be implemented across the country by 1st June next year. The decision to this effect was taken by the GST Council at its 24th Meeting held on 16th December. The meeting was held through video conferencing and was chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The System for e-way bill generation will be ready by 16th of next month and the States may choose their own timings for its implementation on any date before 1st June next year.

In a statement the Ministry of Finance said, the rules for implementation of nationwide e-way Bill system on a compulsory basis will be notified on 1st February next year. It will bring uniformity across the States for seamless inter-State movement of goods.

NITI Aayog launches ATL Community Day

The National Institute of Transforming India (NITI) Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission launched the Atal Tinkering Lab's Community Day in New Delhi. The day marks Community Drive Initiative in which 25 young Mentors engaged with more than 200 students who are not enrolled in the formal education system. The initiative is aimed at maximizing impact of Atal Tinkering Labs by extending innovation to children in the community who do not have access to formal educational institutions.

Environment:

National Green Tribunal imposes complete ban on plastic items in Haridwar and Rishikesh

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposed a ban on plastic items like carry bags, plates etc in Haridwar and Rishikesh, located on the banks of the River Ganga. The move was taken to tackle and prevent pollution of the Ganga. The NGT passed the direction after noting that despite its earlier order, plastic was being used in these areas causing pollution to the river.

Sports:

Official emblems for Beijing 2022 Winter Games unveiled

The emblems of the Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games have been named "Winter Dream" and "Flight," respectively. The emblem launching ceremony was held at the National Aquatic Center, which staged the swimming events during the Beijing 2008 Games. In 2022, this venue will be transformed into an ice rink for curling games.

- ❖ The chief designer of the two emblems is Lin Cunzhen, deputy dean of China Central Academy of Fine Arts' Design School.
- ❖ She started her work in the field of Olympic emblem design back in 2003.