



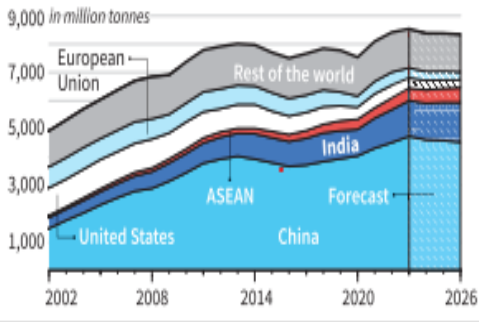
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18 December 2023

International & National News

Demand for Coal is Expected to Drop by 2026



- Despite record production, global coal demand is **expected to fall 2.3% by 2026**.
- According to the **IEA (International Energy Association)** analysis, the reduction is due to a shift toward renewable energy and plateauing demand in China.
- **India will continue to be a major driver of coal demand until 2026.**
- In 2023, global coal demand is expected to increase by **1.4%, surpassing 8.5 billion tons**.
- **Regional variations:** the EU and US forecast a 20% decline in demand, whereas India and **China expect an increase**.
- **Between 2024 and 2026, an El Nino to La Nina change is forecast, which will benefit hydroelectric generation.**

Factors contributing to the drop include low-cost solar deployment and increased nuclear generation.

- China, which accounts for more than half of global coal use, predicts a drop in **2024 and a plateau in 2026**.
- Despite the drop, worldwide coal consumption is predicted to surpass 8 billion tons by 2026.
- **Coal demand is declining structurally as clean energy alternatives continue to expand.**

The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Office, and Terms of Office) Bill, 2023 was passed by the Rajya Sabha.

Context

- The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (**Appointment, Conditions of Office, and Terms of Office**) Bill, 2023 was passed by the Rajya Sabha.
- The Bill lays out the process for naming the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
- The Election Commission of India (ECI), comprising the CEC and two ECs, is established under **Article 324 of the Constitution**.
- The President is authorized under the Constitution to nominate the CEC and ECs, subject to parliamentary approval.
- **In response to a PIL, the Supreme Court declared in March 2023 that a legislative vacuum is regulating the nomination procedure.**
- The Supreme Court proposed a committee-based selection process including the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, and Leader of the Opposition.
- **Previously there was no separate committee for selecting the Election Commissioners.**



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About

- The proposed law establishes an **organized framework with search and selection committees**, but it excludes the **CJI from the process**.
- Individuals holding positions comparable to the rank of **Secretary to the Government of India shall be appointed as CECs and ECs**.
- **The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and a Union Cabinet Minister recommended by the Prime Minister make up the selection committee**.
- The mechanism of the Bill differs from worldwide standards, with differences in selection processes in nations such as South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- While the **Bill improves the selection process**, it is **criticized for favouring the existing administration**.
- Retaining the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on the selection committee, as indicated by the Supreme Court, might provide more independence.
- The Bill is expected to become law, and unanimous choices by **the selection committee may boost public trust in the Election Commission of India (ECI)**.

Unemployment: a concern for the state

Year	All			Urban			Rural		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
2016-17	46.2	74.3	14.9	44.7	72.6	14.6	47	75.1	15.1
2017-18	43.7	72.4	11.8	42	70.5	11.1	44.6	73.4	12.2
2018-19	42.9	71.7	10.9	41.2	69.5	10.3	43.7	72.8	11.3
2019-20	42.7	71.2	10.8	40.6	68.5	9.4	43.8	72.5	11.6
2020-21	40.0	67.2	9.2	37.4	64.2	7.3	41.4	68.7	10.2
2021-22	40.1	67.0	9.2	37.6	64.4	7	41.4	68.3	10.4
2022-23	39.5	66	8.7	37.5	64.1	6.9	40.5	66.9	9.7

Context

- The recent breach of Parliament Security is a major occurrence in the last decade.
- **The assailants were either unemployed or dissatisfied with their current situation.**

About

- According to a review of employment-related statistics from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), things **got worse after the outbreak of COVID-19**.
- The percentage of the working-age population employed or actively looking for work is displayed in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) report.
- Except for the pandemic years, India's overall LFPR in **FY23 was 39.5%, the lowest level since at least FY17**.
- It was **8.7% for women and 66% for males, the lowest percentages since at least FY17**.
- Therefore, even after the epidemic, a growing percentage of Indians in their working years were neither employed nor eager to look for **jobs**.



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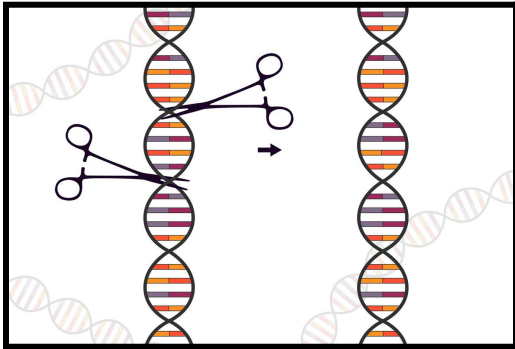
Along the border with Assam, Bhutan will build a sizable green



About

- Bhutan intends to construct a sizable "international city" that would span more than **1,000 square kilometres** near its **border with Assam**.
- The concept was introduced as an **"economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India's northeastern States"** by King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan.
- **The project includes the first railway line from India to Bhutan**, which will run to Gelephu and link to roads and border **crossings into West Bengal and Assam**.
- The goal of the Gelephu Smart City Project is to adhere to sustainability and environmental regulations while luring top-tier investment from carefully chosen foreign businesses.
- **The concept calls for the construction of Bhutan's second international airport, "zero emission" enterprises, and a "mindfulness city"** with an emphasis on tourism and well-being.
- To encourage foreign investment, Gelephu will function as a **"Special Administrative Region" governed by distinct legislation**.

The Era of CRISPR Therapeutics



About

- **Exagamglogene Autotemcel** was authorized by the **MHRA (U.K.)** to treat sickle-cell disease and thalassemia.
- It is one of the **first dual-approved CRISPR medicines**, having also received **FDA (United States)** approval for sickle-cell disease.
- **This marks the beginning of a new era for millions of people suffering from genetic blood diseases** such as thalassemia and sickle cell anemia.
- There are about a million thalassemia sufferers worldwide, with 100,000 requiring blood transfusions. **Around 20 million people are affected with sickle cell anaemia**.
- CRISPR technologies of the first generation are in use, with increasing efficacy and efficiency.
- **Base-editing, prime editing, and epigenetic impact modification are examples of emerging approaches**.
- Verve Therapeutics is experimenting with base editing to treat familial hypercholesterolemia.

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