



Headlines

Ahilyabai Holkar - Page No.4 , GS 1

Rebuilding J&K - Page No.8 , GS 2

India and Pakistan - Page No.8 , GS 2

Students with skills - Page No.8 , GS 2

Dam projects - Page No.10 , GS 3

Internet users - Page No.11 , GS 3

Fiscal deficit - Page No.13 , GS 3

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“Today is the architect
of your tomorrow.
Build it with intention.”



PM to attend 300th birth anniversary celebrations of Ahilyabai in M.P. today

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over the commemoration of the 300th birth anniversary of erstwhile queen of Indore Ahilyabai Holkar on Saturday. The event, which will be held in Jamburi Maidan, Bhopal, is being organised jointly by the Union Culture Ministry and the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Ahilyabai Holkar is remembered for her people-centric policies, deep commitment to economic and socio-cultural issues, specially those that affected the lives of women. She encouraged education of women and their participation in the social and religious life of the local community.

She also supported and encouraged women weavers to make Maheshwari

The events are a part of the Union Culture Ministry's campaign to celebrate India's culture and heritage

sarees, an official statement by the Union Culture Ministry said here on Friday.

This event is a part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to commemorate and celebrate India's heritage and remember the visionaries who have shaped the foundations of Bharat, the statement said.

Commemorative coin

On the occasion, the PM would also release a commemorative coin and stamp in her honour. There would also be an exhibition that chronicles her life, works, and contributions to Indian society and culture.

Page No. 4, GS I



Content.

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- She encouraged education of women and their participation in the social and religious life of the local community.
- She also supported and encouraged women weavers to make Maheshwari sarees, an official statement by the Union Culture Ministry said here on Friday.

Fact

- Ahilyabai Holkar was the queen of Indore within the Maratha Confederacy. She established Maheshwar (in Madhya Pradesh) on the banks of the Narmada River as the capital of the Holkar Dynasty.
- She was born in 1725 to a Dhangar/Gadariya (shepherd) family in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district.
- Her father, Mankoji Shinde, was from a respectable Dhangar (Gadariya) family who served as the Patil (title like village head).
- Although women did not go to school back then, Ahilyabai's father taught her to read and write.
- Ahilyabai gained prominence when Malhar Rao Holkar, a commander in the Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao's army, visited Chaundi.
- Impressed by her piety and character, Malhar's son, Khande Rao Holkar, married Ahilyabai on the Peshwa's advice in 1733.

- After her husband's death in the 1754 Battle of Kumbher against the King of Bharatpur, Ahilyabai took control of Malwa.
- She excelled at administrative and military strategies under the guidance of her father-in-law, who believed she should lead her people and not die by Sati.
- After the death of her father-in-law and son a few years later, she petitioned the Peshwa to become the ruler, backed by the support of her army.
- She defended the Malwa state against intruders and personally led armies into battle, with Tukoji Rao Holkar as her military commander.
- Ahilyabai was known for her administrative acumen, breaking traditional gender norms in 18th century India.

- Ahilyabai was a prolific builder, constructing Hindu temples and Dharmashalas across the Indian Subcontinent.
- Ahilya Bai resurrected the jyotirlingas across the country as a tribute to Lord Shiva.
- She carried out renovations in Somnath temple, Kashi Vishwanath temple Varanasi (1780), Trambak, Gaya, Pushkar, Vrindavan, Nathdwara, Haridwar, Badrinath, Kedarnath and many other sacred sites.
- She patronised many artists, including Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram.
- She established Maheshwar (in Madhya Pradesh) as the seat of the Holkar Dynasty.
- She promoted Maheshwari saris (from Maheshwar) and paved the way for empowering women.
- Ahilyabai repealed a traditional law that allowed the state to confiscate the property of childless widows.



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PRELIMS TO INTERVIEW (P2I)

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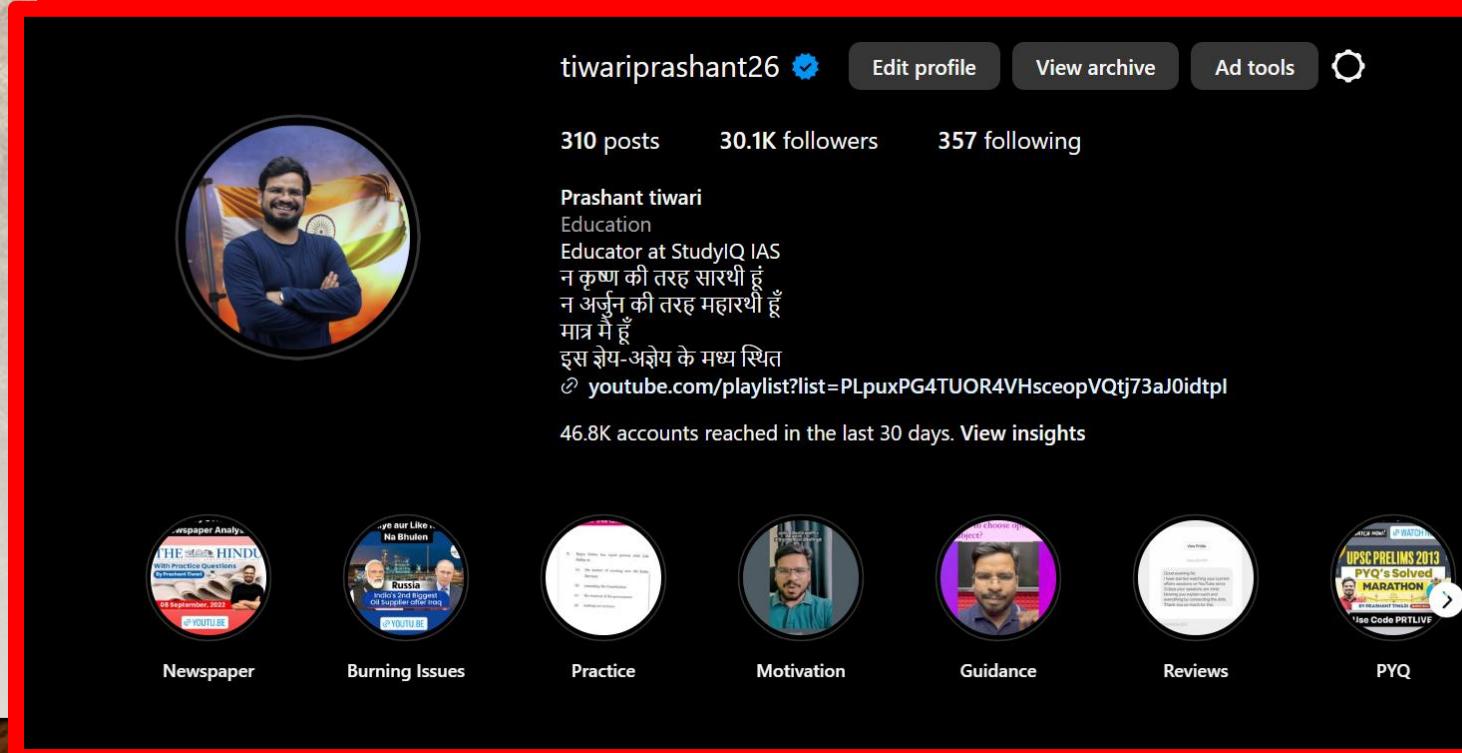
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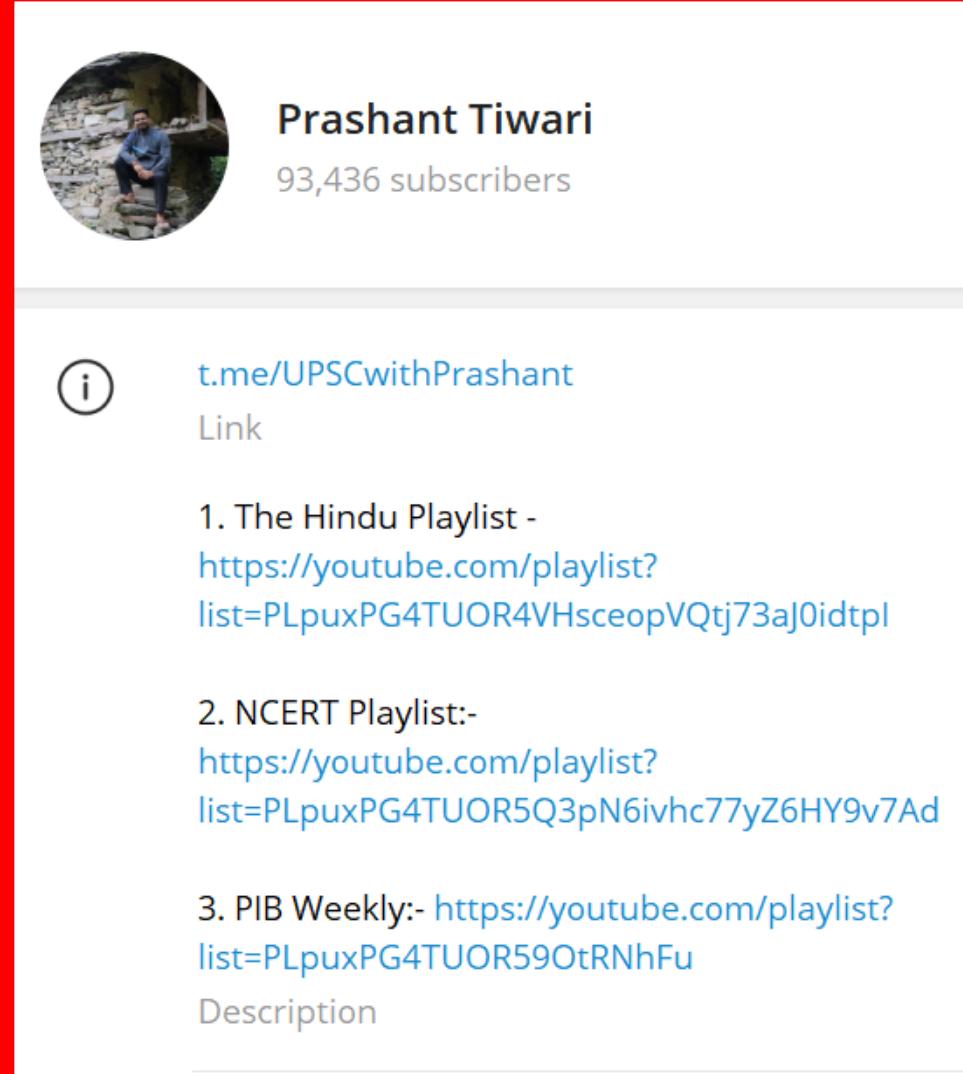
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Prashant tiwari
Educator at StudyIQ IAS
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3. PIB Weekly:- [https://youtube.com/playlist?
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Description

Government meets fiscal deficit target of 4.8% for FY25

Fiscal deficit, or difference between total expenditure and total revenue, at ₹15.77 lakh crore, stood at 4.8% based on latest provisional estimates of GDP for FY25; income tax collections fall short

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

The Government of India has met its fiscal deficit target of 4.8% of GDP in 2024-25 though total receipts came in slightly lower than expected, as per data released by the Controller General of Accounts.

The Centre's total revenue – counting tax, non-tax and capital receipts – came in at ₹30.78 lakh crore in 2024-25 or 97.8% of its revised estimates for the year. Total expenditure stood at ₹46.55 lakh crore, also 97.8% of the estimates.

The fiscal deficit, the difference between total ex-

Fiscal math

Total revenue fell short of the revised estimates due in large part to shortfall in miscellaneous capital receipts



- Centre earned just 52.1% of revised projections via miscellaneous capital receipts
- Divestment receipts stood at ₹10,131.32 crore in 2024-25
- Income tax collections at ₹11.83 lakh crore were almost 6% lower than estimates

penditure and total revenue, at ₹15.77 lakh crore, stood at 4.8% of GDP based on the latest provisional estimates for the year.

As part of the Centre's fiscal consolidation glide path, Finance Minister Nir-

mala Sitharaman had, in Budget speech in February, targeted fiscal deficit of 4.4% of GDP for FY26.

Closer examination of the data show total revenue fell short of the revised estimates due in large part

to a shortfall in miscellaneous capital receipts, that includes disinvestment proceeds. There was also a minor shortfall in tax revenue. The Centre earned ₹17,202 crore as miscellaneous capital receipts or just 52.1% of revised estimates for FY25. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management data show the government earned ₹10,131.32 crore via disinvestments in 2024-25.

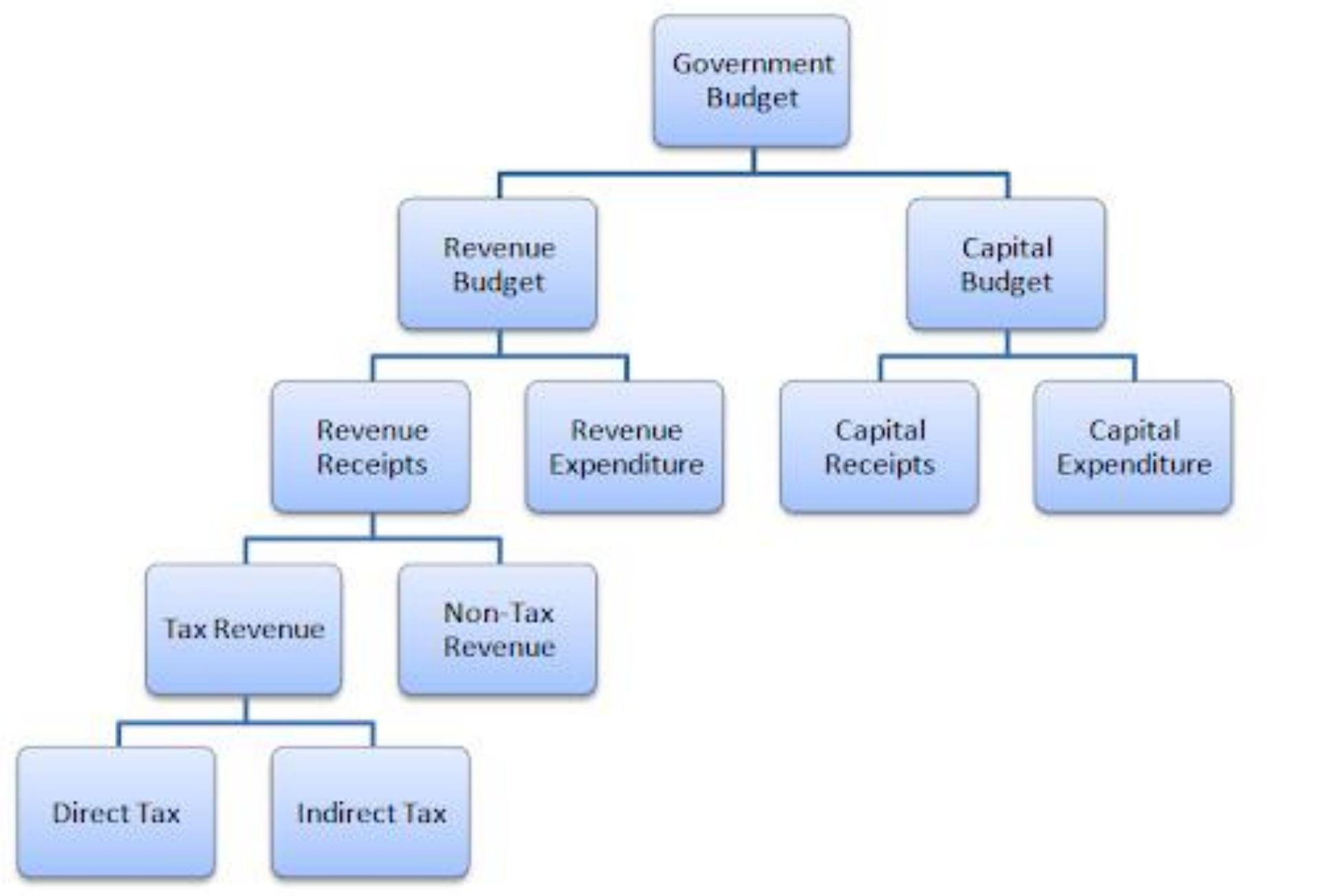
Corporate tax collection at ₹9.87 lakh crore in FY25 was 0.7% higher than revised estimates. Income tax collections, on the other hand, at ₹11.83 lakh crore were almost 6% lower than revised estimate.

Page No. 13, GS 3

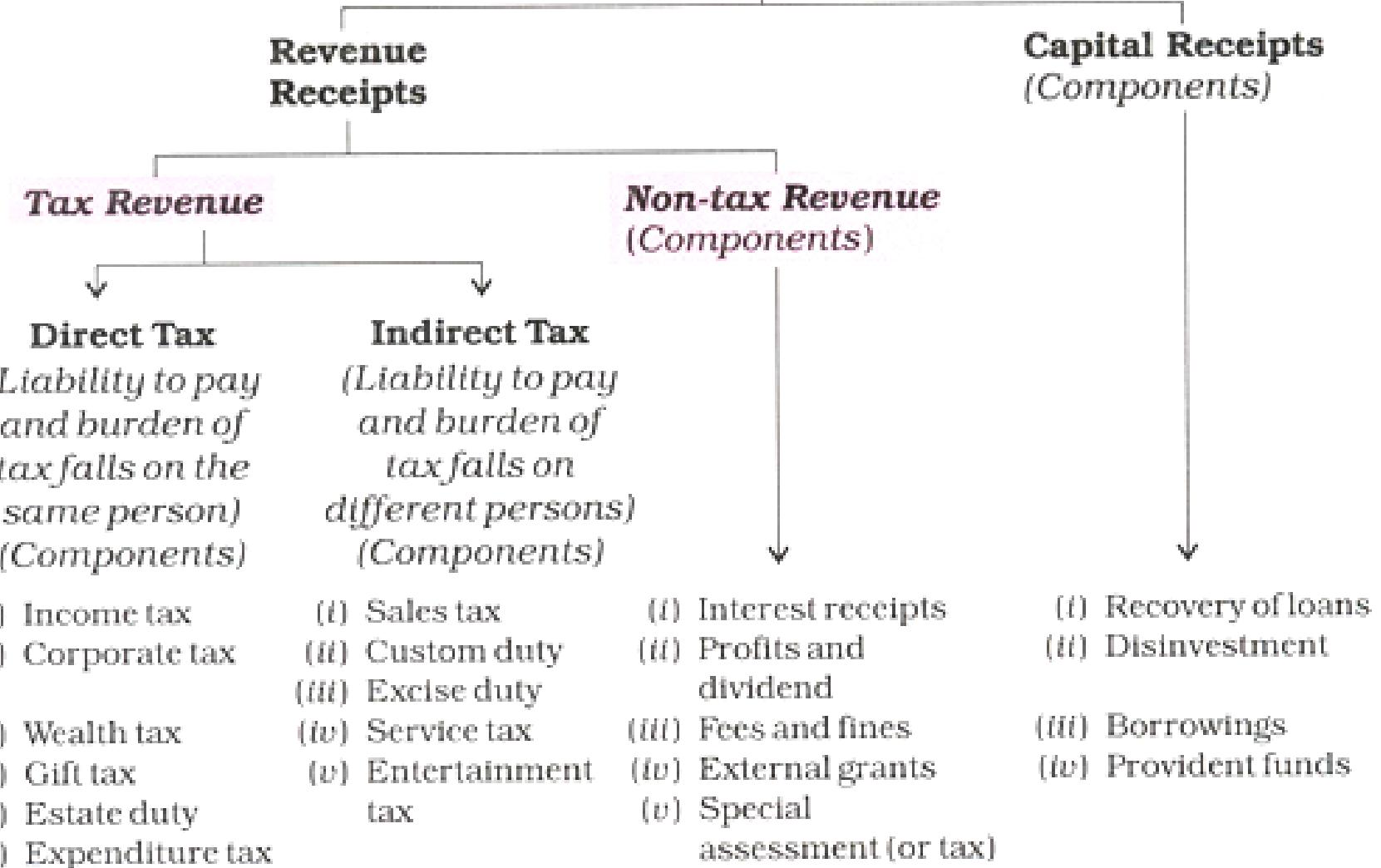
Content.

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- The fiscal deficit, the difference between total expenditure and total revenue, at ₹15.77 lakh crore, stood at 4.8% of GDP based on the latest provisional estimates for the year.
- As part of the Centre's fiscal consolidation glide path, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had, in Budget speech in February, targeted fiscal deficit of 4.4% of GDP for FY26.

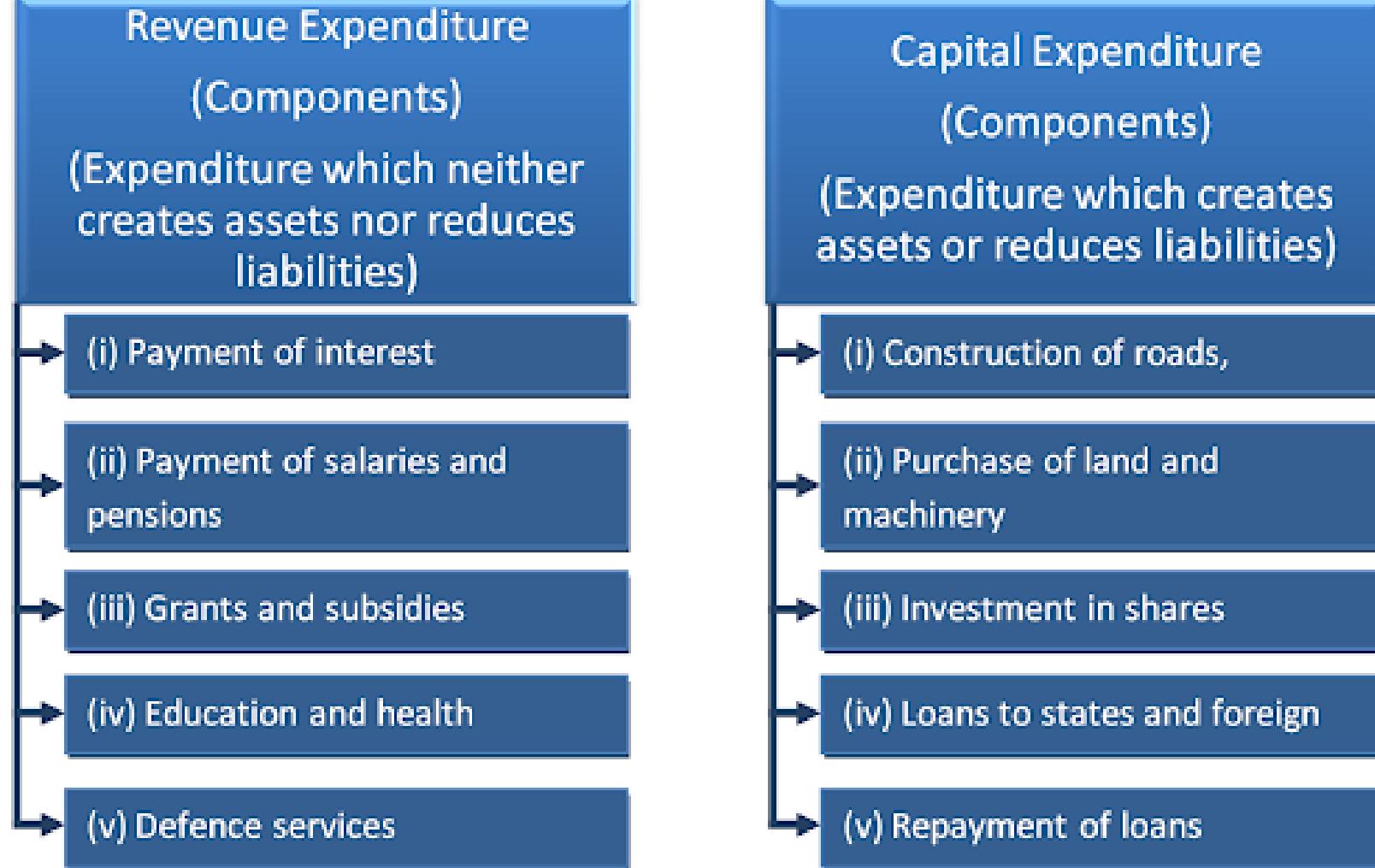
	Fiscal Policy	Monetary Policy
Definition	It is a macro-economic policy used by the government to adjust its spending levels and tax rates to monitor and a nation's economy	It is a macro-economic policy used by the Central Bank to influence money supply and interest rates.
Institutional Control	Controlled by the Government	Controlled by the Central Bank
Prime Objective	To influence the economic condition	To influence the money supply and interest rates.
Major Tools	Public Expenditure, Taxation, Public Borrowing etc	Bank Rate, Cash Reserve Ratio, Statutory Liquidity Ratio etc.



Budget (Govt.) Receipts



Budget (Government) Expenditure



'India will have 1 billion Internet users by this fiscal year'

The BharatNet investments in rural and remote connectivity are the largest in the world, says Minister of Communications and Development of North Eastern Region; almost 2.14 lakh gram panchayats were connected in the first phase and the next phase is about connecting another 2.64 lakh gram panchayats, he says, adding that a central network operating hub will be put in place for maintenance

INTERVIEW

Jyotiraditya Scindia

Varghese K. George
Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

With increasing data usage, the Internet market has grown from around 250 million to 974 million subscribers, says Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DONER). Laying stress on the role of innovation and investment, Mr. Scindia discusses the potential of India's telecom industry and the way ahead for improving connectivity. Edited excerpts:

This year's theme for the India Mobile Congress (IMC) is 'Innovate to Transform'. What's the

message here for the domestic telecom industry?

India has already proven itself to be the second largest telecom market in the world. In the last 11 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, the mobile market grew from roughly 1 billion to 1.2 billion customers; we have also hugely grown data usage and the Internet market from around 250 million to 974 million Internet subscribers. We should be able to hit one billion Internet users within the first half of next year, or even within this fiscal year.

Calling prices have gone from 50 paise to 0.003 paise a minute; and data has gone from ₹287 to ₹9 a GB. We are today the cheapest data market in the world.

With such a large market, it is important for India to start pioneering the product space and therefore IMC's theme this year of 'Innovate to Transform' very much ties in with its

theme last year, 'The Future is Now'. Many products are also now being made in India.

We have gone from importing 80% of our mobile phone requirements to becoming a huge exporter of about ₹1.75 lakh crore worth of mobile phones. The Bharat 6G Alliance that we've put together is working on contributing a minimum 10% of patents to the world of 6G. And it is our hope that in this year's IMC, we will have over 150,000 visitors from 150 countries.

With telecom equipment, homegrown technologies like OpenRAN and 5Gi were designed but their use in networks was not widespread.

Which is why, in the Production-Linked Incentive Scheme – which has been tremendously successful, with over ₹4,000 crore of investment and ₹80,000 crore in revenue, close to ₹16,000 crore of exports,



we laid almost 7 lakh kilometres of fibre optic cables. We connected almost 2.14 lakh gram panchayats. We're now working on BharatNet II.

We hear a lot about Starlink and satellite communications. What else is being done in the long term plan for improving terrestrial connectivity in remote areas?

As far as BharatNet is concerned, in the first phase,

chayats. Along with that, we have put together many new systems in BharatNet II which were not prevalent in BharatNet I.

These include: using Multiprotocol Label Switching routers instead of Gigabit Passive Optical Network routers; changing the network topology to insulate villages from disconnection due to a single cut; the project implementation agencies have been mandated to maintain the network for 10 years after building it; we're putting together a central network operating centre, to monitor and maintain the network throughout the country; and we are also going to put in place independent engineers to ensure checks and balances.

So it's a much more robust system that we're trying to put in place.

Vodafone Idea Ltd. (VIL) has been suffering financially for multiple quarters. They have also had a setback at the Supreme Court, which

refused to revise the calculation for their Adjusted Gross Revenue dues. To what extent is the government willing to step in and make sure that there are at least three private operators in the telecom market?

We have three private operators and one state-owned operator. I think that's a very healthy environment. Having said that, I think each company has to manage its own profit and loss (P&L) and balance sheet. We have done an equity conversion of almost ₹37,000 crore with VIL. The government now holds 49%. We don't intend to increase that stake above 49% at any point in the future.

On the Department of Posts: what impact has the Post Office Act, 2023 had on modernising India Post?

The Indian postal department is one of the most robust, largest distribution

and logistics networks of any organisation – and I'm weighing my words – in the world. And in the modern day, to be able to optimise its service delivery to a logistics organisation, the amendment to the Post Office Act empowers us to provide that flexibility to our Department, to be able to serve new markets, niche or otherwise.

A lot of the new changes that we are being able to put in place of making it a comprehensive service provider; not only mail, but postal life insurance, post office savings bank, and the India Post Payments Bank – which is making profits three years early.

We're thinking of coming up with a digital access code for every single latitude and longitude in the country.

Today, the postal department is empowered to be able to deliver all those capabilities by the amendments to the Act.

(For full interview, visit newsth.live/scindiaspeaks)

Content.

- **With increasing data usage, the Internet market has grown from around 250 million to 974 million subscribers, says Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DONER).**
- **India has already proven itself to be the second largest telecom market in the world. In the last 11 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, the mobile market grew from roughly 1 billion to 1.2 billion customers; we have also hugely grown data usage and the Internet market from around 250 million to 974 million Internet subscribers. We should be able to hit one billion Internet users within the first half of next year, or even within this fiscal year.**
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Fact

- The National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) was launched in 2011 and later renamed the BharatNet Project in 2015 under the Ministry of Communications.
- It aimed at providing high-speed broadband connectivity to every Gram Panchayat (GP) across the country.
- It is one of the largest rural telecom projects in the world, designed to offer affordable broadband access and enable the delivery of e-health, e-education, and e-governance services in rural India.
- The project initially aimed to connect approximately 2.5 lakh GPs across the country.

- **Phase I:** Connected 1 lakh GPs using optical fiber (OF) cables and existing infrastructure, completed in 2017.
 - **Phase II (ongoing):** Expands coverage to 1.5 lakh GPs using optical fiber, radio, and satellite technologies, with collaboration from state governments and private entities.
 - **Phase III (ongoing):** Focuses on integrating 5G technologies, increasing bandwidth, and enhancing last-mile connectivity.
 - The Amended BharatNet Program (ABP), approved in 2023, is part of this phase.
-
- **Funding and Execution:** BharatNet is primarily funded through the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN), a fund that replaced the Universal Service Obligation Fund.
 - The project is executed by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), incorporated under the Indian Companies Act 1956.
 - Under the ABP, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) serves as the Project Management Agency for the operation and maintenance of the network.

Villagers up in arms against dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

An intense opposition to a proposed mega-dam in the Siang River belt has set off a chain of protests against other hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh.

A society representing several villages wrote to the Dibang Valley district authorities on May 29, voicing its “strong and reasoned objection” to the 400 megawatt Mihundo (Mihumdon) Hydroelectric Project proposed on the Dri River. Scheduled to be commissioned in 2026, this run-of-the-river project was assigned to the Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam.

The Ekhomye Mowo Welfare Society, based in Anini, said the project was illegal as the mandatory free, prior, and informed consent was not obtained from the Gram Sabha or the residents of Angrim Valley who would be affected.

After the dam in the Siang River belt, projects on the Dri and Lohit rivers now face opposition

Opposition to the Dri River project came a day after residents of the remote Nukung and Mla villages voiced their resistance to the proposed 1200 MW Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project on the Lohit River in Anjaw during a social impact assessment review.

According to the assessment, Nukung and Mla villages would be severely affected by the project. In a letter to the Anjaw Deputy Commissioner, the Nukung Welfare Society said the project was unacceptable to the indigenous communities in the area. Villagers said the potential submergence of sacred Mishmi tribal cultural and spiritual sites by the dam was of particular concern.

Page No. 10, GS 3

Content.

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Siang's course





Rebuilding J&K

Civilians need physical and economic security to recover from the shelling

Jammu and Kashmir bore the brunt of Pakistan's response to Operation Sindoora, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah rightly focused on both security and development during his visit to Poonch, where residential areas were hit by shelling from across the border. A comprehensive relief package is planned alongside the construction of more underground shelters for civilians. The J&K government is still in the process of assessing damages, but Poonch was by far the worst-affected district. A preliminary report submitted by a committee set up by the BJP to the Ministry of Home Affairs identified 1,500 houses – 690 in Poonch and 534 in Uri – that were damaged in the indiscriminate shelling. At least 18 civilians – 14 in Poonch alone – lost their lives. Pakistani shelling hit towns in Poonch, Baramulla, Kupwara and Rajouri, and the damage to civilian infrastructure was considerable. Mr. Shah on Friday visited the affected regions, expressed solidarity with the people, and handed out job appointment letters to the kin of those who lost their lives. Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, and representatives of the Trinamool Congress visited the victims.

These border residents felt heard, their sense of fear dissipated to some extent, and their morale boosted by these visits. The Indian Army's statement on the India and Pakistan ceasefire "not having an expiry date" is reassuring for the border residents. Life is limping back to normalcy with residents returning to their homes, many of them shattered by the shelling. The J&K government is struggling to meet the demands of the affected population. This was evident from the relief amount approved up to ₹1.2 lakh to fully damaged houses. The affected and displaced residents described it as "insufficient" for them to return to their once-concrete and multi-storey houses. Against this backdrop, Mr. Shah's promise of a relief package is a ray of hope. Around 9,500 bunkers – 8,000 in the Jammu division and 1,500 in the Kashmir Valley – have been built by the Centre so far. However, there is a growing demand for individual bunkers in sparsely located populations in border areas of J&K, especially in the Kashmir Valley, to ensure civilians manage to shift to safer locations immediately in case of shelling by Pakistan. The Centre and the elected government in J&K should work in tandem to help border residents who are in distress.

Page No. 8, GS 2

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- **there is a growing demand for individual bunkers in sparsely located populations in border areas of J&K, especially in the Kashmir Valley, to ensure civilians manage to shift to safer locations immediately in case of shelling by Pakistan.**

Pakistan's India war

As India reflects on the outcome of the brief military conflict with Pakistan in early May, it may be worthwhile to ponder over the current reality that even as India's cultural diversity and sweep of history may be unparalleled in a civilisational context, it remains prone to attacks from countries in its vicinity and beyond. An incorrigible Pakistan is continually finding ways and means every few years to provoke a conflict, and despite being worsted in every one of these conflicts and wars, remains undeterred, seeking to 'bleed India by a thousand cuts'.

The very existence of a secular democratic India appears to be anathema to Pakistan. As India progresses towards becoming a global power (it is already the fourth largest economy in the world), Pakistan is descending into near anarchy. Yet this neighbour of ours, dominated by a military mindset, is contriving to find ways and means of undermining India's progress. Peace for India, hence, depends on who rules Pakistan, which almost invariably is the military. There are no easy solutions to this problem, and India needs to prepare for war at all times.

The Pakistan of today

Today, it is fashionable to talk of the disintegration of the world order. The deafening silence of the world to the 'genocide' taking place in Gaza, with innocent civilians being killed at an alarming rate, contrasts with the din and noise – and the numerous efforts at peace – being made to end the Ukraine conflict. This dichotomy of approach stems from a grim truth or reality, viz., that the world has different standards when it comes to the killing of Asians and Europeans. If there is any further evidence needed to demonstrate that the international order is crumbling and that 'might is again becoming right', one has only to look at the recent conflict provoked by Pakistan, which the West scrambled to end once they found Pakistan was the loser.

A crucial 'sub-text' to how bigger nations intervene to end a conflict between smaller entities is also now becoming available. For instance, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has bartered his critical mineral resources to gain U.S. support in the war against Russia. In the Pakistan context, it is now being surmised that U.S. interest in claiming to having brought peace between Pakistan and India (notwithstanding denial by the latter) stems from U.S. interest in Pakistan's store of critical minerals, such as lithium, copper and rare earths. Also, intrinsic to this is the fact that the military in Pakistan, which is and has been, the critical player in the regional sweepstakes, is unlikely to forget the U.S. President's 'gesture' even if there is little substance to his claims.

Peace in the subcontinent is the major casualty today, and not solely because of the short (recent) India-Pakistan conflict. India, and the region itself



M.K. Narayanan

Former Director,
Intelligence Bureau;
former National
Security Adviser; and
former Governor of
West Bengal

today, confronts a military Pakistan which has shed the cloak of democracy and is today a virtual military dictatorship. It has a titular civilian Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, who is standing in for his brother (Nawaz Sheriff), who is legally constrained from holding an electoral office.

More important, the government is 'in hock' to the army, and the latter after having denied Imran Khan an opportunity to contest elections, is now showing its true colours. A few weeks ago, Pakistan's current Chief of Army Staff, Gen., now Field Marshal, Asim Munir proclaimed that Pakistan is not a democracy, but a religious entity. He went on to say that in the history of humanity, there had been only two states based on the 'Kalima'. The first was the Riyasat-e-medina. The second, 1,300 years later, was Pakistan. He added that 'Pakistan is different from Hindus in every possible aspect of life – religion, custom, tradition, thoughts and ambitions' and that 'Kashmir was the jugular vein'. The rest is history – a future in which further conflicts should be anticipated.

What to expect next

It might, hence, be useful to surmise what one might expect from the recent India-Pakistan conflict. It is certain that there will be a recrudescence of religious nationalism, not only in Pakistan, but across parts of South and West Asia. Next, is the impact of the technological revolution – limited though the conflict might have been. The conflict has demonstrated the criticality of ensuring 'escalation dominance' in the shortest possible time. Furthermore, one should view the recent conflict as a kind of 'proxy conflict' between hi-tech military suppliers on either side. Each has been more anxious than the other to know how their equipment performed – the Rafale versus China's J-10C, for instance – hoping to find better answers to their respective electronic signatures during future operations.

Also, India and Pakistan have demonstrated their ability to flood the heavens with inexpensive expendable reconnaissance and strike vehicles. Above all, there is a realisation that there is more to drones' warfare than was known till date.

Reams have been written about Pakistan's use of Turkish Songer drones and China's J-10C during the recent conflict. India is said to have responded by using Kamikaze drones and the like. What is evident from all this is that air defence today involves several multi-layered air defence systems. Unproven, however, is whether Pakistan could integrate a Pakistani ground radar illuminating an Indian target enabling a Chinese J-10C fighter to launch its missile to hit its target as both China and Pakistan propaganda make out. The latter is solely in the realm of speculation – essentially by Pakistan and China – though what comes out loud and clear is the versatility of airborne early warning systems and the kind of

system integration in place. All this has brought a new dimension to airborne warfare. Today's 'noise' is, hence, all about air-to-air engagement, with speculation being rife as to whether Chinese-origin weapon and air defence mechanisms have the measure of India's Rafale fighters and Western equipment. To equipment manufacturers, it is the effectiveness of the 'kill chain' that matters, or is more important, than the capabilities of specific fighters.

What is, however, proven is that the Aakash Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile alongside Russia's S-400 and the Barak (jointly developed with Israel) provided India with more than adequate cover. India possibly did not need to employ or demonstrate its ultimate weapon, the Brahmos (jointly developed with Russia). Pakistan clearly has no answer to it. Both sides did, however, show an improved capability for electronic counter-counter measures to penetrate enemy jamming and evasion tactics.

Technological warfare of the future

The conflict, however, demonstrated in no uncertain terms that future wars will essentially be technological in nature. Technological dominance and the speed with which escalation takes place will dictate the course of future wars. Currently, India has an edge over Pakistan as far as escalation dominance is concerned, but this need not always be the case. It is also important to remember that in a fragmented, multipolar, geopolitical environment, there will be little scope or time for imposing restraint on a party, once a major conflict begins. Arms control agreements also may have little relevance in future wars. Worse, it is already the best known secret that new nuclear warheads and cruise missiles are being designed and kept in readiness for use. The realisation needs to dawn that the nuclear threshold is narrowing rapidly.

It is germane to mention here that while India's position on land, sea, and air is more than adequate to deal with a Pakistan, the situation could alter in the event of a two-front war involving both China and Pakistan. In such a situation, India will need to balance the combined capabilities of Pakistan and China and this will throw up some neglected aspects such as India's lack of a dedicated satellite system and satellite-based surveillance network. It bears repetition that modern warfare increasingly depends on space-based assets to act as an early warning system and for a variety of tasks, apart from tracking and communication. This lacuna will need to be overcome in real time before the next outbreak of a major conflict, whether with Pakistan, China, or any other country, occurs. To reiterate, India cannot afford to overlook its inadequacies as far as space-based capabilities are concerned. Space is the new domain of warfare, and India must be fully prepared for this eventuality.

Page No. 8, GS 2

Content.

- As India progresses towards becoming a global power (it is already the fourth largest economy in the world), Pakistan is descending into near anarchy.
- Yet this neighbour of ours, dominated by a military mindset, is contriving to find ways and means of undermining India's progress.
- Peace for India, hence, depends on who rules Pakistan, which almost invariably is the military. There are no easy solutions to this problem, and India needs to prepare for war at all times.
- Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has bartered his critical mineral resources to gain U.S. support in the war against Russia.
- Peace in the subcontinent is the major casualty today, and not solely because of the short (recent) India-Pakistan conflict.

- Aakash Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile alongside Russia's S-400 and the Barak (jointly developed with Israel) provided India with more than adequate cover. India possibly did not need to employ or demonstrate its ultimate weapon, the Brahmos (jointly developed with Russia).
- The conflict, however, demonstrated in no uncertain terms that future wars will essentially be technological in nature. Technological dominance and the speed with which escalation takes place will dictate the course of future wars.
- India's position on land, sea, and air is more than adequate to deal with a Pakistan, the situation could alter in the event of a two-front war involving both China and Pakistan.
- In such a situation, India will need to balance the combined capabilities of Pakistan and China and this will throw up some neglected aspects such as India's lack of a dedicated satellite system and satellite-based surveillance network.

As the admission season for colleges and universities begins, institutions across India are once again promoting their programmes under banners promising knowledge, transformation, and research excellence. This growth in enrolment at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD levels suggests a dynamic academic landscape full of potential. Yet, beneath this expansion lies an important challenge: degrees are proliferating faster than meaningful job opportunities.

A gap that needs attention

According to data released by the Ministry of Statistics, the unemployment rate in India tends to increase with higher education levels. This paradox reveals a critical gap between academic achievement and employability – a gap that requires urgent attention.

This challenge is particularly acute in India's vast network of non-elite institutions in Tier 2 and tier 3 colleges, where most students pursue BA, BCom, or BSc degrees and their corresponding master's programmes. These institutions often face resource constraints and limited industry connections, operating with curricula that have not kept pace with the evolving job market. While elite colleges make headlines for placement challenges, the gradual erosion of employability in everyday colleges often goes unnoticed.

In many such institutions, instruction remains largely theoretical, with limited emphasis on real-world skills. For example, an English literature student might study Shakespearean tragedy yet miss out on learning practical skills such as writing professional emails. Similarly, an economics graduate may understand complex



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Viewing education as a social contract that guarantees a meaningful connection between learning and livelihood is essential

theories but struggle with everyday tools such as Excel. This disconnect means millions of educated young people find it difficult to translate their degrees into career opportunities.

This situation stems partly from a deeply entrenched academic culture that values scholarship and abstraction over practical application. Within many academic circles – even prestigious ones – higher education is often celebrated as an end in itself, while immediate employment is sometimes subtly undervalued. Postgraduate degrees and PhDs are frequently pursued not just for intellectual fulfilment but as a refuge from the job market, creating a cycle where many graduates end up teaching in the very colleges that perpetuate the same system.

It is important to recognise that successive governments have acknowledged this issue. Initiatives such as Skill India, Start-Up India, and the National Education Policy have pushed for skill development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship. However, the transformation remains incomplete. Many undergraduate and postgraduate programmes continue to emphasise rote learning over practical skills. While new courses in AI or entrepreneurship are being introduced, they often lack depth, and integration into the broader curriculum.

A broader societal challenge

Countries such as China and Japan have successfully aligned education with economic strategies by elevating technical and vocational education to a central role in workforce development. In India, vocational training is still often perceived as a fallback option, both within academia and society. This stigma limits the

appeal and effectiveness of skill-based education, despite its vital role in economic empowerment.

This contradiction highlights a broader societal challenge: degrees are highly valued as symbols of upward mobility, but they increasingly fail to guarantee it. This is not a call to abandon liberal education or abstract learning – they remain essential for critical thinking and creativity. However, education must also provide tangible economic benefits. Degrees should offer pathways to agency and dignity, especially for students from smaller towns and under-resourced institutions.

A way forward lies in integrating practical skill modules – communication, digital literacy, budgeting, data analysis, hospitality, tailoring, and health services – into general degree programmes as core elements, not optional extras. Doctoral education should be diversified to prepare candidates for policy, analytics, consulting, development, and industry roles, not solely academia. Research remains vital, but it must be pursued by those inclined towards it.

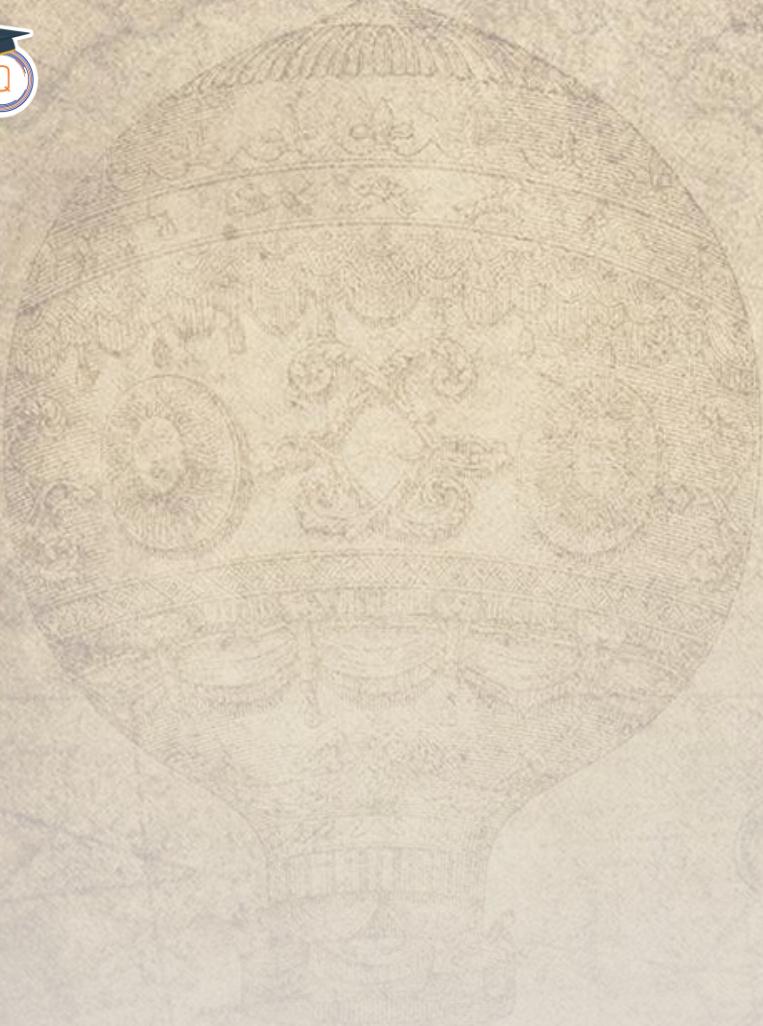
Finally, the widespread aspiration for government jobs reflects the limited opportunities graduates currently perceive. While these roles remain important, expanding private sector and entrepreneurial pathways through improved employability will offer youth a broader range of options. Enhancing skills and opportunities can reduce the over-dependence on competitive exams. India's growing economy demands an education system that not just enrolls students, but equips students with skills. Viewing education as a social contract that guarantees a meaningful connection between learning and livelihood is essential.

Content.

- As the admission season for colleges and universities begins, institutions across India are once again promoting their programmes under banners promising knowledge, transformation, and research excellence.
- This growth in enrolment at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD levels suggests a dynamic academic landscape full of potential. Yet, beneath this expansion lies an important challenge: degrees are proliferating faster than meaningful job opportunities.
- According to data released by the Ministry of Statistics, the unemployment rate in India tends to increase with higher education levels. This paradox reveals a critical gap between academic achievement and employability — a gap that requires urgent attention.
- This challenge is particularly acute in India's vast network of non-elite institutions in Tier 2 and tier 3 colleges, where most students pursue BA, BCom, or BSc degrees and their corresponding master's programmes.

Fact

- It is important to recognise that successive governments have acknowledged this issue. Initiatives such as Skill India, Start-Up India, and the National Education Policy have pushed for skill development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship. However, the transformation remains incomplete.
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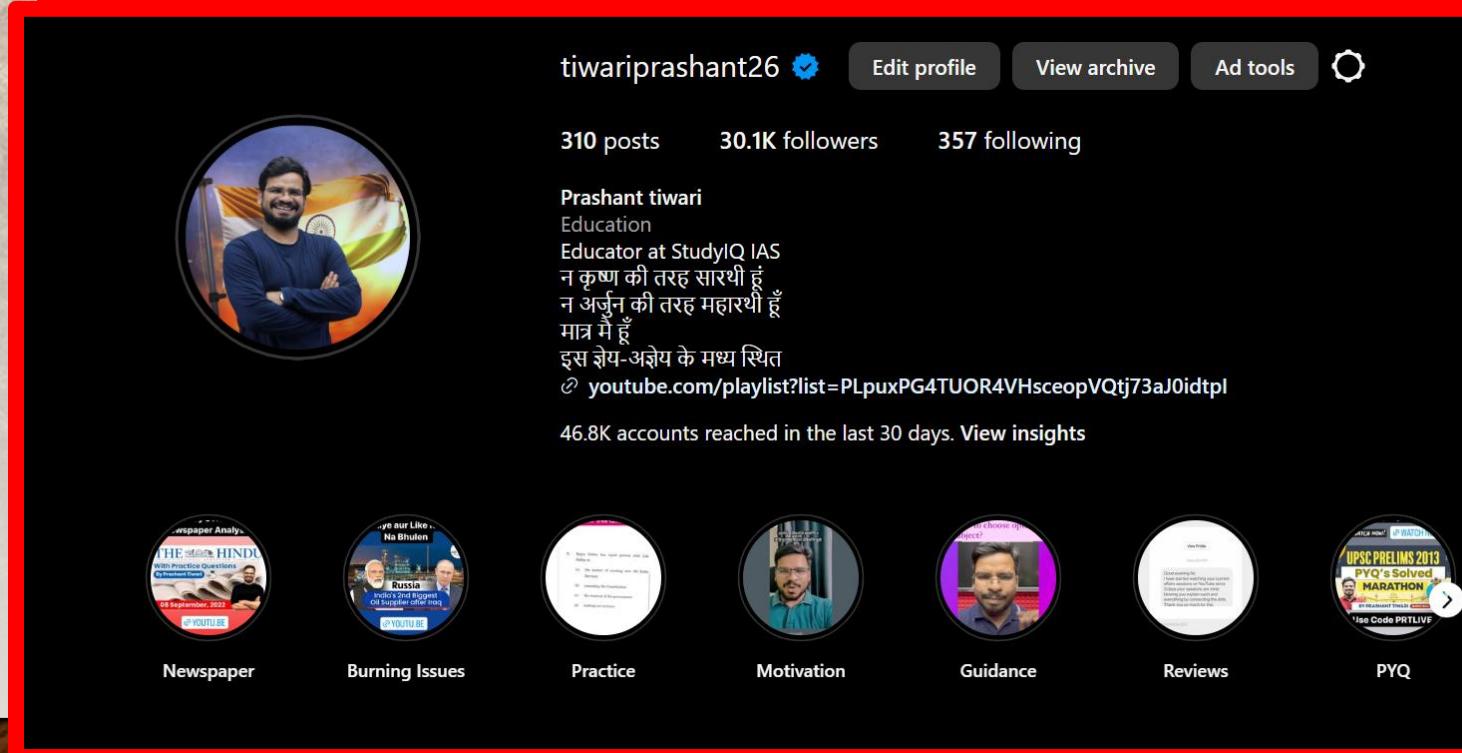
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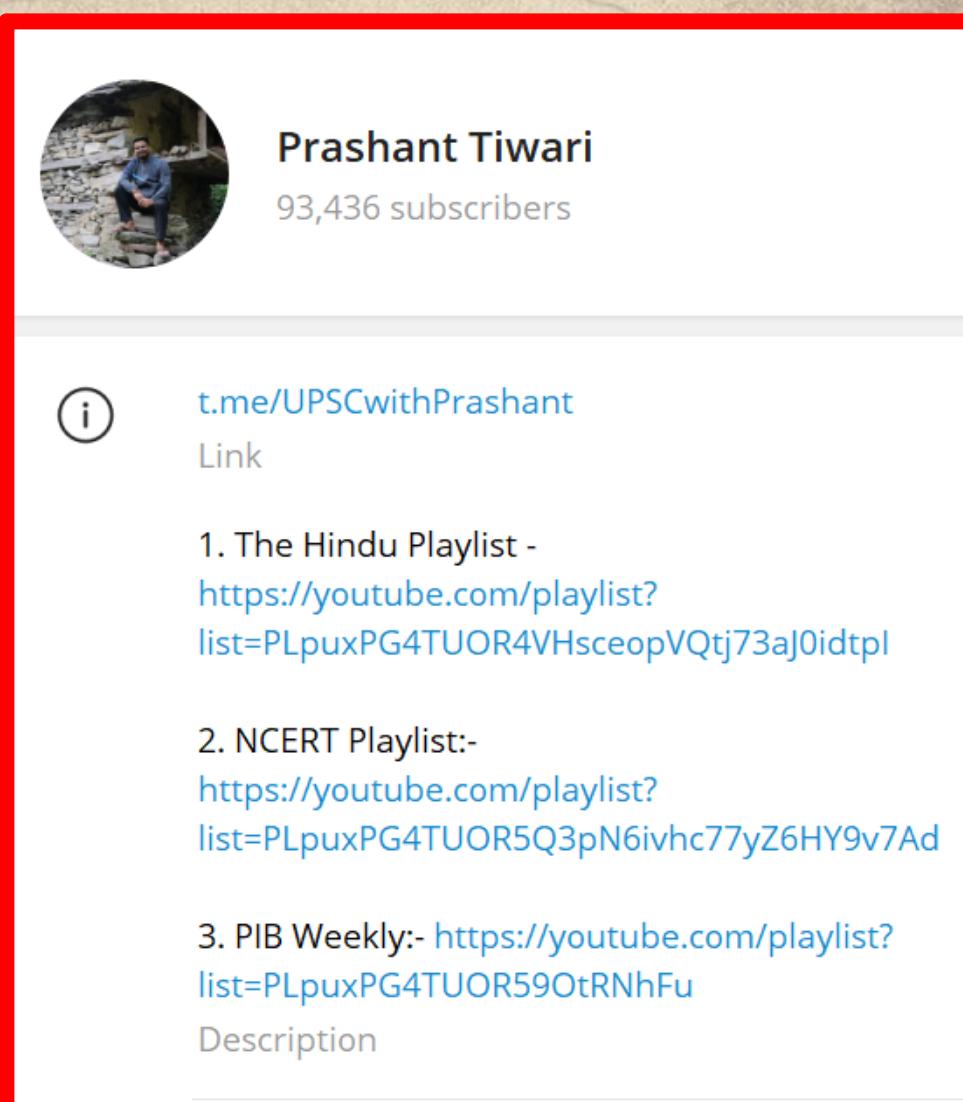
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