**MPGA: National Budget 2024 Demands**

India today is witnessing stark jobless growth – especially amongst young graduates, the unemployment rate stands at 43%, and overall at 6.5% this fiscal. For a country looking to cash in on the Demographic Dividend, these are worrying numbers. Inflation and price rise are also the urgent issues of the moment.

1. The TSR Subramanian Committee in 2019 echoed the recommendation of the Kothari Commission (1984) that the government increase the allocation for education exp. to 6% of GDP.
2. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance led by Jayant Sinha in February 2024 recommended a reduction of the GST rates on insurance products, especially health and term insurance, which is 18 per cent at present. Insurance companies as well are seeking a reduction in GST rates on life insurance products to 12%. The rationalisation of GST applied on intermediate and finished goods is also necessary.
3. In February, a Parliamentary Standing Committee recommended that the wages for MGNREGA labourers should be at par with agricultural wages and should be at minimum ₹375 per day across all states. There is also a need to review and track the devolution of MNREGA funds to State Governments. Many State Governments have raised the issue of delayed payments for MNREGA over the past few years.
4. Farmers Unions over the past few years have demanded:
5. Monthly pension of ₹10,000 for farmers aged 60 or more
6. Legal Guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for All Crops, and a revision of the pricing regimes after a consultation with farmers and relevant stakeholders.
7. Implementation of the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations to provide debt waivers to farmers. All debts of the farmers above Rs. 10,000 to be waived, worth ₹18.4 lakh crore.
8. Disability rights activists call for a 5 per cent allocation for employment across all ministries for disability inclusion and the removal of GST on essential assistive devices. The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People stresses the need for earmarking budgets across different ministries to ensure targeted funding for disability inclusion.
9. 10.6% of India’s population lives with mental health conditions, yet [76-85%](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15173149/) of those in need of mental health care do not receive any services or support. Less than 1% of the country’s total budget for health is allocated for mental health.

The Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare in 2023 noted that India currently has 0.75 psychiatrists per lakh people, which is significantly low. It observed that if India targets having three psychiatrists per lakh people, it will need 27,000 more psychiatrists.

1. The Joint Forum for Restoration of Old Pension Scheme (JFROPS), constituted under the banner of the NJCA, demanded that the finance ministry restore the defined non-contributory and guaranteed Old Pension Scheme in place of the NPS. In a pre-budget consultation meeting with union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, trade unions on Monday demanded restoration of the Old Pension Scheme.
2. The allocation for Census Survey and Statistics was slashed to ₹1,277.80 crore from ₹1,546.65 crore in The Union Budget 2023-24. There is an urgent need for the conduction of an inclusive and comprehensive socio-economic census, which has been demanded by various political parties and social groups.
3. Despite the regime’s push for domestic manufacturing and investment through campaigns like Make In India, the manufacturing GDP growth rate has averaged 5.9% since 2013-14, the share of manufacturing has remained stagnant and was at 16.4% in 2022-23, and [manufacturing jobs halved between 2016 and 2021](https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy-make-in-india-half-of-manufacturing-jobs-lost-in-five-years-2256758/#:~:text=From%20employing%2051%20million%20people,crisis%20caused%20by%20the%20pandemic.). The decade of Make in India saw the share of manufacturing in the workforce [decline](https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/indias-manufacturing-sector-faces-worsening-decline-implications-for-growth-employment-and-income-11686851477882.html#:~:text=Even%20by%20share%20of%20employment,11.6%25%20in%202021%2D22.) from 12.6% in 2011-12 to 11.6% in 2021-22.
4. The Standing Committee on Energy submitted its report on February 3, 2022, and noted that there is a huge gap between the required and actual investment for Renewable Energy capacity addition. Against the required annual investment of Rs 1.5-2 lakh crore, the actual annual investment in the last few years was Rs 75,000 crore.
5. Various Mid-Day Meal Schemes are funded majorly by the Central Govt. through the PM Poshan Yojana. The government is expected to spend ₹12,467 crore on the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM - POSHAN) scheme, an increase of ₹2,467 crore when compared with FY24 revised estimates. While it has increased in terms of absolute numbers, if the allocation is expressed as a share of the total Budget, the Samagra Shiksha scheme’s share comes to 0.79% in FY25, much lower than the pre-pandemic years.

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