

India's Coal Stocks at Record High

India's energy landscape has once again demonstrated resilience and forward planning, as coal production and supply continue to outpace consumption in FY 2025-26. According to the latest data, coal stocks at thermal power plants and coal mines have reached unprecedented levels, underscoring the country's preparedness to meet any unexpected surge in demand. This is a reassuring development for industries, power utilities, and policymakers, reflecting a well-managed energy strategy that balances production, storage, and distribution.

As of March 9, 2026, the pithead coal stock at the mines of Coal India Limited (CIL) has grown from 106.78 million tonnes (MT) on April 1, 2025, to 121.39 MT, highlighting consistent production efforts. When combined with stocks at the mines of Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), captive and commercial mines, and coal in transit, the total coal stock reaches a historic high of 156.58 MT. In addition, thermal power plants hold around 54.05 MT of coal, sufficient to meet approximately 24 days of consumption at current rates. Collectively, India now has roughly 210 MT of coal available, adequate for about 88 days, ensuring that power generation and industrial operations remain uninterrupted.

The data also shows that coal supply to the Non-Regulated Sector has increased by nearly 14 percent compared to the previous year, further reflecting the country's ability to meet diverse energy requirements. This growth in production and strategic stockpiling is a result of coordinated efforts among the Ministry of Coal, Coal India Limited, SCCL, other mining entities, and the Railways, which play a crucial role in transporting coal efficiently across the country.

Beyond immediate supply considerations, this proactive approach serves a larger purpose. Reliable coal availability strengthens India's energy security, providing a buffer against unforeseen demand spikes, seasonal variations, or logistical challenges. It also enables industries and power plants to plan operations without disruption, contributing to economic stability. Moreover, by maintaining performance-driven production, closely monitoring outputs, and engaging stakeholders through policy facilitation, the Ministry of Coal ensures that coal continues to support the country's growing energy needs while fostering transparency and accountability in the sector.

Looking ahead, India's coal strategy aligns with broader national objectives, including the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. By ensuring stable energy supplies today, the country lays the foundation for sustainable industrial growth, uninterrupted electricity generation, and long-term energy security. While renewable energy sources are steadily gaining ground, coal remains an indispensable component of India's energy mix, particularly for base-load power. Maintaining robust stockpiles and efficient supply chains will remain critical as the country navigates the twin challenges of economic growth and energy transition.

In conclusion, India's record-high coal stocks and ongoing production efforts are not merely statistics—they are a testament to foresight, coordination, and preparedness. They highlight a system capable of responding to unprecedented demand while securing the nation's energy future.

The Smoke-Free Challenge: Take Control of Your Health

National No Smoking Day (12th March) is an ideal time to start your journey towards a healthier, smoke-free life. Everyone is aware that "Smoking" has been criticized as the most lethal weapon of self-destruction. According to the Tobacco Products Act, 2004, direct and indirect advertising of all tobacco products and their sale to minors is banned.



Addiction to nicotine makes it hard to quit. The increasing incidence of heart attacks in India, fast spreading among the younger generation, has been largely on account of smoking habits. "No Smoking Day" is a powerful reminder that quitting smoking is one of the best decisions you can make for your health.

The problem of smoking in India is widespread, but no studies have been done to estimate what percentage of the population are smokers. Roadside paan shops, bountiful

ly stocked with cigarettes, feed smokers continuing to exhale smoke from cigarettes. It is a fact that smoking is a hard habit to break because tobacco contains nicotine, which is highly addictive.

Smoking harms not just the smoker but also family members, coworkers, and others who breathe the smoker's cigarette smoke, called secondhand smoke or passive smoke.

In fact, statistics tell us that approximately 70 out of 100 people who smoke want to stop but continue puffing, day in and day out, seemingly powerless to quit. Research has shown that non-smokers who reside with a smoker have a 24% increase in risk for developing lung cancer when compared with other non-smokers.

Owners of sales outlets must display boards with warnings like "tobacco causes cancer", "tobacco kills", and "sale to minors is a punishable offence". Sometimes it happens that notification prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors has no effect as teenagers continue to buy tobacco/cigarettes on the pretext that they are buying it on behalf of their elders.

The youth are the most vulnerable group as far as the consumption of tobacco is concerned. Most of them begin smoking as a fad and even as a rite of passage. According to The Cigarette Package Health Warnings: International Status Report 2014, India has slipped to 136th position

in the list of 198 countries that warn smokers about the hazards of smoking through graphic pictures on cigarette packages.

Graphic health warnings using a mixture of pictures and words are part and parcel of every country's policy on cigarette marketing. However, cigarette manufacturers share the kitty with vested interests, hence their interest is well protected with simple modifications to fool the general public.

The government has come out with good points to deal with the matter, but at the same time, taxes on tobacco products should go up to help smokers give up. Such methods will be long-lasting. Moreover, there is a need for awareness campaigns to educate people about the dangers of smoking and the benefits of quitting.

It's high time people wake up to the danger of smoke to themselves and passive smokers before it's too late. Quitting smoking can be challenging, but it's not impossible. With the right support and resources, smokers can overcome their addiction and lead a healthier life.

Let's join hands to create a smoke-free India and promote a healthier lifestyle for all. Let us take a step towards a healthier, smoke-free life - ditch the cigarettes and embrace freedom from nicotine.

Dr. Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit
(Writer & Cartoonist)

Kidney Disease Rising in India: 138 Million Affected, Experts Call for Early Detection and Lifestyle Change

On the occasion of World Kidney Day, observed every year on 12 March, doctors from Mumbai are urging people to prioritize kidney health through awareness, early detection and healthy lifestyle choices. This year's global theme, "Kidney Health for All: Caring for People, Protecting the Planet," highlights the need for preventive care and equal access to treatment for kidney patients. Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is emerging as a major public health concern in India. Studies suggest that over 138 million people in the country may be affected by some form of kidney disease, making it one of the fastest-growing non-communicable diseases. The rising cases

of diabetes, hypertension, obesity and sedentary lifestyles have significantly increased the risk of kidney damage among Indians. India had the second-highest number of people with chronic kidney disease in 2023 at 138 million, following China at 152 million, according to a global study published in The Lancet journal. Kidneys play a crucial role in filtering toxins, balancing body fluids, regulating blood pressure and supporting red blood cell production. However, kidney disease is often called a "silent disease" because a person can lose up to 50% of kidney function without noticeable symptoms. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Puneet Bhuwania,

Consultant Nephrologist & Transplant Physician at Wockhardt Hospitals Mira Road, said, "Kidney disease often progresses silently and many patients are diagnosed only when the condition has advanced. Regular screening, especially for people with diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity or a family history of kidney disease, can help detect problems early and prevent serious complications."

Dr. Puneet Bhuwania further emphasised that prevention remains the most effective way to protect kidney health. Doctors at Wockhardt Hospitals Mira Road recommend maintaining regular physical activity, monitoring blood sugar and blood pressure

levels, reducing salt intake, drinking adequate water, avoiding smoking and limiting the long-term use of over-the-counter painkillers.

Commenting on increasing kidney problems among young kids Dr. Amit Jain, Nephrologist from Apex Group of Hospitals, Mumbai says, "On World Kidney Day, it is worrying to see kidney problems appearing at a younger age. Many youngsters are unknowingly damaging their kidneys through unhealthy lifestyles—excess junk food, high salt intake, sugary drinks, poor hydration, lack of exercise, and misuse of painkillers or supplements. Kidneys silently suffer for years before symptoms appear.

Prevention must start early. Young people should prioritize balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, adequate water intake, and routine health check-ups. Protecting kidney health today is essential to avoid serious complications like chronic kidney disease and dialysis later in life."

Health experts highlight that early diagnosis and timely lifestyle changes can significantly slow the progression of kidney disease and reduce the need for dialysis or transplant. On this World Kidney Day, citizens are encouraged to take proactive steps by getting their kidney function tested and adopting healthier habits to save.

Umesh -Priti

Now Comes the Smart Glasses: Written Read and Recite

DR. VIJAY GARG

Technology is constantly making human life easier and more convenient. After smartphones, smartwatches and artificial intelligence now a new technology in the discussion is smart glasses. It's the kind of eyepiece that can read words in voice by recognizing what is written on its face. This technique can prove to be a great help especially for visually impaired people and individuals who feel difficulty in reading.

What is smart glasses

Smart glasses look like ordinary eyewear, but they are equipped with small cameras, sensors, speakers and artificial intelligence-based software. The technology recognizes the written letters with the help of Optical Character Recognition and then turns them into a voice.

Thus the user can listen to information written on a book, newspaper, board or any document.

How does the work

A small camera in the frame of a smart glasses takes a picture of an object in front. The processor in the glasses then reads that picture and turns it into words. Then with the help of Artificial Intelligence and text-to-speech technology he can recite words as voice to user. Some advanced smart glasses can also connect to mobile phones or the internet, making them even more convenient to use.

A boon to the sighted

This technique is especially useful for those who have difficulty reading. Blind people can

now understand books, letters, signs and documents without the help of others.

Smart glasses can give them more freedom and confidence. This makes it easier to get information in education, daily work and public places.

Use in education and society

The use of smart glasses is not limited to the visually impaired. Students, researchers and busy professionals can also use it. For example, one might listen to a book or document as they walk.

In addition this technology can provide new opportunities for language learning, translation and information retrieval.

Future prospects

Experts believe that smart glasses will be even more advanced in the coming times. These can also be added with features such as object recognition, face recognition, pathing. Many tech companies are working in this space, including the likes of Google and Meta.

Smart glasses are an example of modern technology that can make human life more simple and inclusive. Especially for the visually impaired, this technology can open a new door of access to knowledge and information.

Thus it can be said that smart glasses are not just a tool, but an important step in the reconciliation of technology and human sense, which may give new direction to education and social life in future.

Dr. Vijay Garg Retired Principal Malout Punjab

No Nation Can Rise Without Its Women

A nation cannot progress if half of its population remains underutilized. Women constitute nearly 48% of India's population, and their participation in social, economic and political life is essential for the country's sustainable development. From managing households to contributing in science, governance, business and agriculture, women play a critical role in shaping the foundation of a strong and progressive nation. Therefore, empowering women and ensuring their equal participation in every sector is not merely a matter of social justice but a necessary condition for national development.

One of the most important areas where women contribute to nation building is the economy. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the female labour force participation rate in India has increased significantly in recent years, rising from about 23.3% in 2017-18 to over 41% in 2023-24. This indicates that more women are entering the workforce and actively contributing to economic productivity.

However, studies suggest that women currently contribute only around 17-18% to India's GDP, which shows that a large economic potential still remains untapped. Women also play a vital role in agriculture and rural develop-

ment. In rural India, millions of women work in farming, livestock management and food production. Agriculture employs nearly 45% of India's workforce, and women form a substantial part of this labour force. Their contribution ensures food security, rural stability and sustainable agricultural growth.

In recent years, women have also emerged as successful entrepreneurs and innovators. Government initiatives such as Startup India and Stand-Up India have encouraged female entrepreneurship across the country. As a result, thousands of women-led startups are now contributing to economic growth, job creation and innovation. This growing presence of women in business is gradually transforming the economic landscape of India.

Despite these contributions, women remain underrepresented in leadership and political decision-making. In the 2024 Lok Sabha, only about 14% of Members of Parliament are women, which reflects the need for greater representation in governance. Increasing women's participation in politics can lead to more inclusive and balanced policies, especially in areas like healthcare, education and social welfare.

We are living in the 21st century. The world has become modern, technology is advancing rapidly, and

India is progressing in many fields. We proudly say that our country is developing and moving forward. However, despite all this progress, there are still many places where the safety of women remains a serious concern.

Even today, I have seen many situations where girls hesitate to step outside alone, especially at night. Fear still exists in their daily lives. As a boy, I want to share a personal experience that made me think deeply about this issue.

One night, I was walking alone around 1 a.m. in a place that felt almost deserted and silent. The surroundings were uncomfortable, and I could see several people wandering around who seemed intoxicated. Honestly, I was scared too. Anyone would feel afraid in such an environment. However, despite my fear, no one approached me or tried to harm me.

Later, a thought suddenly crossed my mind. Perhaps nothing happened because I was a boy.

Then I imagined the same situation differently. What if, instead of me, a girl had been walking through that same lonely place at 1 a.m.? What would she have felt at that moment? The fear, the uncertainty, the constant worry about her safety. Would she have felt safe enough to walk freely? Or would every step have been

filled with anxiety and vulnerability? At that moment, I realized something important. My safety in that situation might not have come from courage or strength; it might simply have come from the fact that I am a man.

This realization made me understand the everyday fear that many women silently carry with them. True progress as a society will only happen when a woman can walk alone at night with the same sense of safety and freedom that men often take for granted.

Conclusion:

The progress of a nation should not only be measured by technology, infrastructure or economic growth, but also by how safe and respected women feel in society. Data already shows that women are contributing significantly to nation building—whether through the rising female labour force participation rate of over 41% (PLFS 2023-24) or their growing role in entrepreneurship, agriculture and education. Yet, safety and equality still remain major concerns. True development will be achieved only when women can move freely without fear and participate equally in every sphere of life. A nation becomes truly strong when its women feel safe, empowered and respected.

Akshay Kumar (Researcher and Digital Creator)

Life is bigger than one exam: Questioning the mindset surrounding the UPSC

DR. SATYAVAN SAURABH

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) results were recently announced. Like every year, the stories of successful candidates are making headlines. The interviews of the toppers, their strategies, their hard work, and their struggles are being discussed across the country. This is natural. The achievements of the young people who succeed in this exam after years of rigorous preparation are certainly worthy of praise.



But amidst all this celebration, there's another aspect that's less frequently discussed. It's the mindset that's forming in our society around the UPSC, which has transformed this exam into not just an opportunity but the ultimate measure of success.

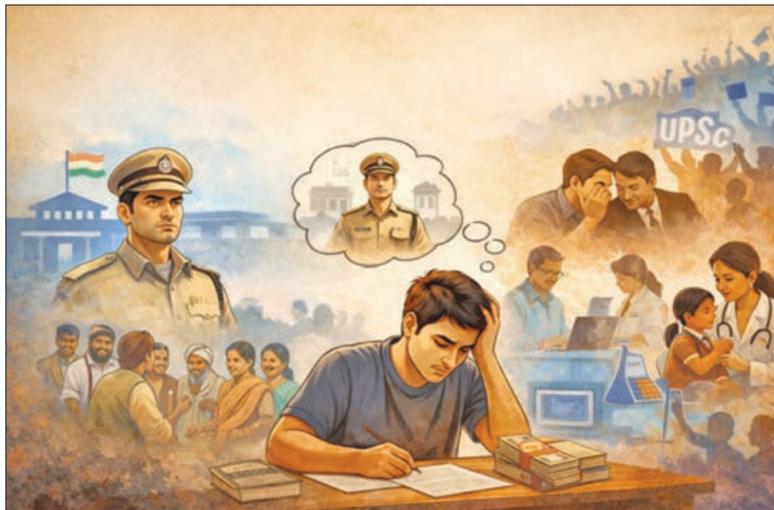
Gradually, the belief that the ultimate goal of education is the UPSC has become deeply ingrained in our social environment. In homes, among relatives, and even in school and college settings, the message often echoes: true success lies in passing this exam. If a young man or woman in a household is selected for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) or Indian Police Service (IPS), it becomes a matter of pride for the entire family and neighborhood. This pride is natural, but it also carries an unspoken message: those who fail to clear this exam are perhaps not as successful.

This mindset often creates unnecessary pressure on the minds of millions of young people. At

the age of 18 or 19, when a student is contemplating their future, the UPSC is often presented as the ultimate goal. Interestingly, very few of these young people actually pursue this path, understanding the complexities of governance, policymaking, or public service. Often, this decision is driven more by the desire for social prestige than by motivation. This trend has intensified in the age of social media. Short video clips, images of officers in uniform, and popular portrayals like "Collector Sahib" or "Supercop" create an attractive image in the minds of young people. But the reality behind these images—long working hours, administrative complexities, constant responsibility during natural disasters, political pressure, and the difficulties of decision-making—is rarely mentioned.

Another important issue related to this exam is that of language. Over the past few years, the representation of Hindi-medium candidates in UPSC results has been steadily declining. This is not just a language issue, but also an issue of equality of opportunity. Many students from smaller cities and towns across the country prepare for this exam with limited resources. They face challenges with the English language, a lack of study materials, and expensive coaching facilities.

Ironically, the officials who must work with the country's diverse population often think and speak in their local languages. Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Awadhi, or other Indian languages are not just a medium of communication but also an expression of social experiences. If the experience of linguistic inequality increases in the selection process, it should be a matter of concern.



and ordinary citizens. At the same time, we must recognize that a nation isn't built solely by administrative services. Today, the contributions of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, and technical experts are equally important to India's progress. Thousands of young people working in information technology are strengthening the country's digital infrastructure. New ideas in the startup world are finding solutions to the problems of farmers, small businesses,

Yet these professions rarely enjoy the social prestige that civil service commands. This imbalance also impacts young people's career choices. Many talented students, simply due to societal expectations, spend years preparing for the UPSC, even though their potential could contribute significantly in other fields. It's also a harsh reality that out of millions of candidates, only a few hundred ultimately succeed in this exam. For the remaining candidates,

the process can often prove lengthy and mentally demanding. Some students persevere for five or six years, during which their age, financial resources, and sometimes even personal relationships are compromised. In the event of failure, they are left feeling as if their struggle was in vain.

In fact, this attitude is the biggest problem. Success or failure in an exam cannot determine a person's full potential or worth. The UPSC is certainly an important exam, but it is not the door to life's possibilities.

As a society, we must understand that there are many paths to success. If we encourage young people to pursue only one path as supreme, we will inadvertently limit their potential.

The need today is that while we respect exams like the UPSC, we shouldn't let them become the sole goal of life. Young people must be assured that their hard work, their talent, and their contributions are not diminished by any single result.

Every profession has its own dignity, and every responsibility has its own importance in society. If we can develop this balanced approach, it will not only reduce unnecessary pressure on young people but also provide the country with talented and dedicated citizens in diverse fields.

Ultimately, it's important to remember that the result of any exam determines only an opportunity, not a person's worth. Life's possibilities are much broader than that—and it is these possibilities that are the true strength of a society. (Dr. Satyavan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)