

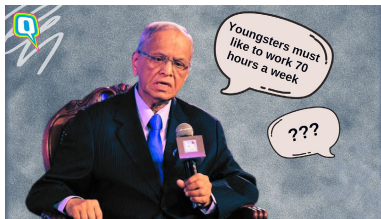


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# CityMatters

## Murthy's Work Hours Call Ignites Productivity Debate in India



“Therefore, I request that our youngsters must say, This is my country; I'd like to work 70 hours a week,” Narayana Murthy stated in an interview. These words, while intending something positive, made a controversial impact on people. The social media blew up where users criticised Murthy's remarks pointing out that such gruelling hours are not feasible, pointing also to the hours spent commuting and struggles of living in a different city.



Ashneer Grover, former MD and co-founder of Bharatpe, also chimed in on the debate. “I think Junta got offended here because work is still being measured in “hours” rather than “outcomes.” The other thing is people feeling as if youngsters' laziness is the only thing keeping India from becoming developed. Funny - getting offended unites us more than cricket, religion, caste or language.”



India's work productivity is one of the lowest in the world. Unless we improve our work productivity, reduce corruption in the government at some level, and decrease the delays in our bureaucracy in taking decisions, we will not be able to compete with those countries that have made tremendous progress.

Statistically, India is a developing country and to compete with other countries we have to be true to our work and not just count the hours. India is positioned at 131 out of 189 nations in the 2021 ranking of GDP per hour worked (GDP constant in 2017), adjusted for purchasing power parity. According to this metric, India is valued at US\$8.47, trailing behind Vietnam (US\$10.22), the Philippines (US\$10.07), Indonesia (US\$12.96), China (US\$13.35), Mexico (US\$20.23), and Malaysia (US\$25.59) – countries with which India either competes in the export sector or seeks investment.

A similar outcome is evident through another measure assessing labour productivity, which is based on the annual growth rate of output per worker in percentage terms (with GDP constant in 2015). In 2022, India's annual growth rate of output per worker increased by only 3.1 percent, significantly lower than Vietnam (4.8 percent), China (3.4 percent), Cambodia (3.6 percent), and even Bangladesh (4.1 percent).

To provide context, while India experienced a decline in output per worker in both 2019 (by 2.9 percent) and 2020 (minus 2 percent), with a recovery of 3.5 percent in 2021, China witnessed substantial growth in these two years at 6.4 percent and 6 percent, respectively, slowing down to 3.6 percent in 2021.

In conclusion, fostering a culture that values outcomes over hours is crucial for India's economic progress. The nation must address challenges in bureaucracy and corruption and enhance work efficiency. Embracing a results-oriented approach will propel India towards global competitiveness, ensuring sustained growth and prosperity on the world stage.

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*Pradeep S. Mehta*  
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

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## Rats Demonstrate Imagination in Virtual Reality Study

Researchers at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute found that rats can imagine and plan, as demonstrated through virtual reality tests. The experiments, focusing on the hippocampus, revealed the rodents' ability to think about navigating towards goals and moving unseen objects, offering insights into brain functions.

The findings may advance neuroprosthesis development, connecting brain activities to control devices.



(Tol, 03.11.23)

long-held beliefs, shedding light on the region's prehistoric past and prompting widespread scientific interest.

(Tol, 23.12.23)

### High Court Upholds Speedy Justice

Madhya Pradesh High Court upholds the right to speedy justice, dismissing a petition against the Chief Justice's order for district courts to dispose of 25 oldest cases each quarter. Prolonged lawyer strikes deemed illegal;



contempt petition pending.

Another bench grants a final chance for Lokayukta and the state government to respond to a complaint against BJP leader Archana Chitnis regarding the misappropriation of funds for a sugar factory.

(Tol, 25.11.23)

### Elevated Titles Banned

Pakistan's Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa has banned the use of 'sahib' in job titles for public servants, stating it elevates their status and fosters a sense of unaccountability. The decision came during a bail plea hearing, where Justice Isa criticised the practice.

(Tol, 21.11.23)

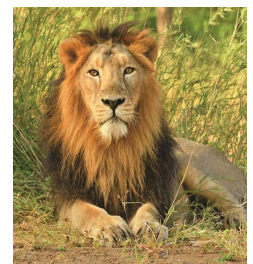
### Maharashtra Policemen Trim Grass

Two Maharashtra policemen were tasked with grass cutting as a disciplinary action for arriving 30 minutes late to a holiday court, where they were supposed to present two detainees. The incident sparked an official report and statements from witnesses.

(Tol, 22.11.23)

### Asiatic Lion Kingdom Expands

Gujarat's Asiatic lion population, once limited to Gir sanctuary, now spans 10 districts, with 674 lions recorded in the latest census. Conservationists propose satellite habitats as the population grows at five percent annually, aiming for 2,600 lions by 2047 under Project Lion.



(Tol, 20.11.23)

### Ujjwala Beneficiary Meets Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an unexpected stop at the house of Meera Manjhi, the 10th crore beneficiary of the Ujjwala scheme, in Ayodhya's



Kandharpur locality. The visit, unannounced to locals, included interactions with the family and compliments on Meera's tea-selling business near Saryu Ghat.

(Tol, 31.12.23)

### Hindu Woman Breaks Barrier

Dr Saveera Parkash, a member of Pakistan's Hindu community, breaks barriers by filing nomination papers for a general seat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Buner district.



Parkash aims to continue her father's legacy with the Pakistan People's Party, advocating for women's rights and a secure environment. The Election Commission's recent mandate ensures the mandatory inclusion of five percent of women candidates in general seats.

(Tol, 27.12.23)

### 'Wed in India' Campaign

The Indian government plans to launch the "India Says I Do" initiative, encouraging domestic and international couples to choose India as their wedding destination.

Intending to showcase the country's diverse venues, the campaign seeks to curb extravagant spending on foreign weddings, promoting India as an ideal location for lavish celebrations.

(Tol, 22.12.23)

### YouTuber Inspires English Learning

Yashodha Lodhi, a rural YouTuber from Sirathu, Uttar Pradesh, overcomes personal hardships to teach spoken English through her channel, 'English With Dehati Madam.' Despite local



scepticism, her videos attract thousands of subscribers, earning her around ₹25,000 monthly and transforming her family's financial situation.

(Tol, 01.12.23)

### Stones Unveil Dinosaur Secrets

Recent findings reveal that the worshipped 'stone balls' in Padlya, Madhya Pradesh, are fossilised eggs of Titanosaurs. The discovery challenges

## Delhi-NCR Air Emergency

The Union Cabinet Secretary conducted a comprehensive meeting to



address the Supreme Court's directives on the Delhi-NCR air emergency. Discussions included exploring the Minimum Support Price for non-paddy crops, phasing out paddy cultivation, promoting maize cultivation, and joint funding models for stubble management.

The Air Quality Index has remained 'severe,' prompting a call for swift implementation of measures.

(Tol, 09.11.23)

## Aligarh to Change its Name to Harigarh

The Aligarh Municipal Corporation has unanimously proposed changing the city's name to Harigarh. If approved by the Uttar Pradesh government, it will join a list of renamed places in the state. Similar renaming trends have occurred following Allahabad's transition to Prayagraj in 2019.

(Tol, 07.11.23)

## Backlash Over Assembly Remarks

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar faces backlash for suggesting in the assembly that educated women can influence



contraception methods. BJP criticises remarks as "vulgar" and "double-meaning," demanding a ban.

(Tol, 08.11.23)

## BJP Condemns Member's Virtual Address

BJP criticises a Kerala rally organised by the Solidarity Youth Movement for featuring a virtual address by former Hamas Chief Khaled Meshaal. BJP calls it an "alarming glorification of terrorists," while organisers defend Hamas as a "resistance movement."

(Tol, 29.10.23)

## Artificial Rain Clears Delhi's Toxic Air

Researchers from IIT Kanpur propose a ₹3 crore artificial rain project, covering 300 sq km of clouds, to alleviate Delhi's severe air pollution. The initiative, coordinated by CII, awaits approvals for a temporary solution targeting a week of relief.

(Tol, 11.11.23)

## Shami's Fairytale Fortnight

Mohammed Shami's remarkable journey from Uttar Pradesh's U-19 rejection to becoming India's leading wicket-taker in the World Cup is a tale of tenacity and commitment.



Overcoming setbacks, Shami's story emphasises the importance of self-belief and constant improvement, proving that one's choices and determination shape life.

(Tol, 04.11.23)

## SC Chief Appeals to Lawyers

Chief Justice of India, D Y Chandrachud, urges lawyers to avoid seeking adjournments in new cases, citing a Bollywood reference to the 'tareekh-pe-tareekh' (date-after-date) court. Despite efforts to expedite cases, 3,688 adjournment slips were filed in the last two months, hampering progress.

(Tol, 03.11.23)

## Husband Issues Triple Talaq

A Saudi man, angered by his wife's styled eyebrows during a video call, pronounced triple talaq. Gulsaba, the



wife, filed an FIR in Kanpur, alleging dowry harassment. The husband, Salim, faces charges under the IPC and the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019.

(Tol, 02.11.23)

## Iranian Activist Wins Nobel Peace Prize

Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi is awarded the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize for her persistent fight against women's oppression in Iran, human rights, and freedom.

The Nobel Committee also recognises the mass demonstrations against the theocratic regime's discriminatory policies. Mohammadi, a prominent activist with a history of arrests, calls for a secular state and has spent years in prison. The Iranian government condemns the award, while advocates of reform celebrate the international recognition of their struggle.

(FT, 06.10.23)

## Blind Student Breaks Barriers

In a groundbreaking achievement, visually impaired 19-year-old Bhuvika Agrawal overcame challenges using technology to secure admission at the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Lucknow. Her journey from Braille to coding and success in JEE (Mains) is an inspiring tale of determination and resilience.

(Tol, 27.10.23)

## Friends Cast Mourns Matthew Perry's Tragic Passing

The "Friends" cast, including Jennifer Aniston, Courtney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, and David Schwimmer, express profound grief over Matthew Perry's sudden death.

He was found unresponsive in his home's hot tub, but the cause remains undetermined. The cast emphasises their close bond beyond being co-stars and pledges support to Perry's family and friends.



(Tol, 01.11.23)

### Equestrian Star Receives Arjuna Award

Jaipur Equestrian Divyakriti Singh Rathore secures Arjuna Award after Asian Games Gold. The 23-year-old, the sole recipient from Rajasthan, is the first



Indian woman in equestrian to be honoured. Rathore ranked No. 1 in Asia, eyes future international success and inspires more women in sports.

(Tol, 20.12.23)

### CM Denies Halting Welfare Schemes

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma assures continuity of Congress-launched welfare schemes, refuting allegations of discontinuation.

Speaking on Good Governance Day, he affirms the continuation of free medicines in government hospitals, attributing welfare initiatives to former PM Vajpayee and current PM Modi.

(ET, 25.12.23)

### Agni's Rajasthan Expedition

Cheetah Agni, who ventured out of Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, was tranquillised in Rajasthan and returned to MP. Released a week ago, Agni crossed into Rajasthan, prompting a swift operation to reunite it with brother Vayu due to their close bond.

(Tol, 26.12.23)

### Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth Leads SW Command

Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth assumes command of the Indian Army's South Western Command, responsible for guarding the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan and Punjab. Seth, an NDA and IMA alumnus, previously led an armoured regiment and a strike corps on the western front.

(HT, 01.11.23)

### 420 Electric Buses Introduced

Jaipur City Transport Services Limited (JCTSL) plans to procure 420 buses, including 300 electric buses for Jaipur, with an expected launch by March 2024. The initiative aims to enhance public transport with air-conditioned e-buses, awaiting approvals and bidding post the model code of conduct.

(Tol, 30.11.23)

### Jaipur Airport Expands Winter Routes

Jaipur International Airport plans to enhance winter flight connectivity with proposals for eight new domestic routes, including cities like Agra, Guwahati, and Jaisalmer.

Airlines such as Indigo, SpiceJet, AirAsia, and Alliance Air are among those proposing new routes, aiming to provide direct connectivity to 27 cities.

The airport, experiencing increased passenger traffic, is undergoing expansion to accommodate anticipated growth.

(Tol, 31.10.23)

### Flyovers to Ease Commuting

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is set to open six flyovers on the Jaipur-Kishangarh stretch, reducing travel time between Jaipur and Ajmer to less than two hours. Despite delays and hindrances, the projects are expected to be completed by May 2024.

(Tol, 19.12.23)

### CM's surprise visit to SMS hospital

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma conducted a surprise inspection at Sawai Man Singh Hospital, finding nursing staff missing from duty at the neurosurgery ward. The health department initiated an inquiry and suspended three accused nurses.

Sharma instructed strict action against absent hospital staff and expressed concern about cleanliness and facilities.

(Tol, 26.12.23)

### Five Wetlands Designated for Ramsar Site

The Rajasthan state government has proposed to the Union Environment Ministry to designate five wetlands, including Khinchan Bird Sanctuary and Chandlai Lake, as Ramsar sites.

Efforts are underway to curb pollution and encroachments at these locations, which are crucial for migratory birds in the Central Asian Flyway.

(Tol, 28.12.23)

### Jaipur Enforces a One-Way System

In response to increased tourist activity, Jaipur Traffic Police enforces a one-way system on the main road from Railway Station Circle to Chinkara Canteen Tiraha. Parking restrictions apply, and buses are only allowed to stop below the Khashakothi Culvert.

(Tol, 28.12.23)

### Action on RWAs for Gate Violations

Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) is planning a crackdown on Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) following numerous complaints about non-compliance with gate closure rules. Residents allege RWAs are closing gates prematurely, causing inconvenience and prompting calls for gate removal.

(Tol, 26.12.23)

### Sand Extraction at Rajasthan Dam

Despite a National Green Tribunal ban, heavy machinery continues illegal desilting and sand excavation at Rajasthan's Bisalpur Dam. The Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project Corporation and mining department face allegations of inaction, while the contractor claims exemption under a disputed government notification.

(Tol, 01.12.23)

### Udaipur's Wetland Status

The Rajasthan government is striving to designate Udaipur, famed for its lakes, as India's inaugural wetland city, aligning with Ramsar Convention criteria. The



state environment department is sending the nomination, emphasising Udaipur's unique wetland features, and a workshop on October 13 will finalise the proposal.

(Tol, 11.10.23)

### Shops Raided for Violating Food Safety Regulations

Health officials inspected 12 sweet shops in Jaipur, seizing 520kg rasgullas and 1,400kg sonpapdis from Patwari Namkeen Bhandar due to



missing details on packaging. A subsequent raid at Bhagwati Grih Udyog found 398kg sonpapdis without the required information. The Health Department plans decoy operations to curb adulteration.

(Tol, 08.11.23)

# Green link: The UN's climate and biodiversity talks should be held together

By Pradeep S Mehta\*

Climate change was the buzzword of the past month or so, but tragically, its link with biodiversity was not. This is in spite of the fact that both issues are dealt with mainly by the same government ministry all over the world. Unless the world approaches both together, we will continue to face a dismal future. We need to break silos and find solutions that will cover both issues, as we seek to promote the Triple Bottom Line of People, Planet and Profits.

The 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (CoP-28) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that concluded in Dubai left a trail of both progress and frustration in its wake. It signifies a step forward in the global fight against climate change, albeit a cautious one. The summit's focus on carbon dioxide removal (CDR) deserves applause, even as it faces flak from purists who see it as a distraction from the dire need to ditch fossil fuels entirely.

However, let's face it, the climate debate is riddled with hypocrisy. The finger of blame for stalling progress often points towards petro-states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, conveniently ignoring the insatiable appetite of the rich everywhere for fossil-fuel energy. Europe, the world's self-proclaimed green champion, still relies on fossil fuels for half its electricity and even burnt the dirtiest of them, coal, during its post-Ukraine war energy crisis.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels is a marathon exercise, not a sprint. Developing nations like India cannot afford such abrupt shifts. Their energy needs necessitate continued reliance on fossil fuels, at least in the near term. Demanding a rapid phase-out without offering tangible, well-funded alternatives is akin to asking children to walk before they can crawl.

Reportedly, more than US\$85bn was committed to climate financing at the summit, but only US\$792mn was pledged for the Loss and Damage Fund. Even the formulation of the Fund, worth peanuts so far, went through much futile debate. Looking at the history of rich countries' promises, confidence placed even in these amounts coming through would be suspect.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels is non-negotiable, but it must be a just, orderly and equitable process. CoP-28 acknowledges this in its focus on "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems." However, to truly succeed, we need a multi-pronged approach.

Firstly, CDR must become a key weapon in our arsenal. The 400-gigatonne carbon budget we have left before exceeding the 1.5° Celsius warming threshold demands



aggressive carbon removal, not just reduction. India, with its burgeoning scientific talent, should invest heavily in CDR research, exploring avenues like carbon dioxide conversion into industrial inputs and bio-based methods for producing ethylene.

Secondly, relying solely on Western funding and technology would be naive. We in the Global South need to foster indigenous climate innovation. CUTS International has suggested a worldwide plan in its campaign for Innovative Finance for Climate and the Planet; ([bit.ly/484YuTX](https://bit.ly/484YuTX)). It has called for the creation of an agnostic 'Fund of Funds' by leveraging various innovative non-government finance sources. Furthermore, a Global Alliance for Leveraging Innovative Finance has been proposed to achieve this goal.

While CoP-28 was not a revolutionary summit, it nudged us toward a united front. The glaring need now is to shed hypocrisy and embrace practical solutions.

A combined CoP for climate and biodiversity, focusing on the environment as a whole, could be one answer. In terms of logistics, it would also cost much less than organizing two separate meetings every year.

Estimated at US\$4-6tn annually, climate and biodiversity finance needs a 600 percent increase to meet 2030 targets. Our proposal of a 'Fund of Funds' envisions money from both public and private sources that can work in conjunction with innovative solutions like green bonds, blended finance, carbon credits and a financial transactions tax.

The costs of inaction skyrocket daily. Action isn't optional, it's a desperate need. The time for empty promises is over. The future demands action. Let's get it done.

*\*Secretary General, CUTS International*

*Shivendra Shekhawat of CUTS contributed to this article.*

*Abridged from an article published in Livemint on December 21, 2023*

# Contributing Towards Scientific and Consumer-Friendly FoPL Foods in India

*India is experiencing an exponentially growing burden of NCDs claiming over 6 million lives in a year in 2020. The probability of dying between the ages of 30 and 70, from four major NCDs (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes) for both sexes is as high as 26 percent. In the year 2011, 53 percent of all deaths were due to NCDs and this proportion has gone up to 60 percent in 2014.*



**T**he burden of NCDs poses a major public health challenge and threat that has the potential to alter the social and economic development of India negatively. NCD management interventions are essential for achieving the global target of a 25 percent SDG 3 target of a one-third reduction in premature deaths from NCDs by 2030.

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According to some estimates, there are around 2.8 million cases of cancer, 39 million with chronic respiratory diseases, 64 million with cardiovascular diseases and 69 million people with diabetes in India. In 2016, one in four deaths in India was due to cardiovascular diseases, with heart disease and stroke responsible for 80 percent of this burden.

Warning labels grab the attention of consumers towards their ill effects, the unhealthy food products sold in the market with HFSS especially oils, fats and foods with trans-fats have gained little attention for their irreversible harmful effects on health leading to NCDs. Studies have highlighted that consumption of trans fats increases the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. It is also associated with a higher risk of developing type-2 diabetes.

CUTS has been advocating since April 2018 with FSSAI to strengthen the proposed Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2018 and notify for implementation. The FSSAI is considering implementing symbol-based front-of-pack nutrition labelling, which they intend to make mandatory. These regulations will form a major stepping stone for India to target HFSS and Trans-fats in packaged food products.

Consumers will be able to select and choose products based on front-of-package information about the amount of Salt, added sugar, saturated fats/trans fats etc. The advocacy started in April 2018 will be continued in this phase and suitable advocacy strategies will be used as per needs.

Sources: BT: Business Today; ET: Economic Times; FE Financial Times; HT: Hindustan Times; LM: Livemint; Tol: Times of India

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