

EDITORIAL

Pharmacists' integral to our health-care systems

Pharmacists are invaluable in our healthcare system, ensuring patients benefit from their medications and maintain good health. On this World Pharmacists Day, take a moment to express gratitude to these dedicated professionals. The unsung heroes of healthcare, pharmacists play a crucial role in safeguarding public health, ensuring safe access to medicine providing invaluable guidance on their use. Despite the growth of pharmaceutical services, public awareness remains a significant challenge. On this day, the world unites to celebrate the existence of pharmacists all around the globe. Let's walk through the ins and outs of World Pharmacy Day, along with understanding how raising awareness remains a key component in educating the public and appreciation for this profession. With time, this day has developed into a powerful base for raising public awareness about the evolving role of pharmacists in the medical field. Straight from offering care to ensuring the safety of medications, the understated contributions of pharmacists often go unnoticed. Hence, this day honours the role of pharmacists, they bring to the table, and the massive help they extend to the health and well-being of communities worldwide. Pharmacists use their best of knowledge and expertise to ensure that people get the most out of their medications; they use their experience, knowledge, and competence to make the medical world a better place for everyone. Additionally, they provide access to medications, instruct patients on how to use them appropriately, and much more. World Pharmacists Day is observed on 25 September each year to recognise pharmacists for the role they play in improving global health. The day encourages activities that promote and advocate for the role of pharmacists in improving health in every corner of the world. Drugs and vaccines are important tools in combating diseases worldwide, but may also cause adverse events, with severity depending upon patient- and product-specific factors. This reality is even more important in developing countries where most medications can be purchased over the counter, including those with a high incidence of side effects or adverse reactions. Pharmacists' help patients understand their medicines, including how to take them correctly, possible side effects, and how they interact with other drugs. Secondly, pharmacists administer various immunizations, including flu shots, pneumonia shots, and shingles vaccines. They also conduct health screenings, such as checking blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and diabetes. Furthermore, they educate the public on various health matters, such as quitting smoking, safe medication practices, and healthy living.

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How Yogi scripted fiscal turnaround in UP

BY
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The glaring contradiction between Congress party's diatribes against Adani and its actions underscores a deeper issue of political expediency eroding its trust

In the meticulous world of public finance, data points often murmur when they should speak. But occasionally, a statistic arrives with the force of a thunder-clap. The Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) recent decadal study delivered precisely such a moment. Among the sixteen states that recorded a revenue surplus in FY 2022-23, one entity did not merely participate — it dominated. Uttar Pradesh, with a surplus exceeding ₹1.50 lakh crore, left other states far behind and stood in a league of its own — a fiscal triumph that demands not just notice, but a profound reassessment of the state's economic trajectory. For decades, Uttar Pradesh was the starkest embodiment of the "Bimaru" syndrome — a term evoking images of economic infirmity and a seemingly intractable cycle of underdevelop-

ment.

To see it now leading the nation in fiscal discipline is to witness a narrative being inverted. This is not incremental progress; it is a paradigm shift. And its architect, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has orchestrated what may be the most consequential political achievement of his tenure. The scepticism that greeted his ascension in 2017 was understandable. The Head Priest of Shree Gorakshnath Temple — a firebrand spiritual figure from Gorakhpur, untested in administration — was tasked with steering India's most populous state.

The presumption was that his regime would be defined by divisive rhetoric while the economy languished, much as it had under previous regimes. The Governments of Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav, for all their political strengths, were often marked by fiscal fragility and growth that consistently lagged behind the national average. Seven years on, the federal auditor's ledger offers a powerful, data-driven rebuttal to those early doubts. The scale of this shift is seismic. Unlike previous regimes constrained by fiscal caution, the Yogi Government executed a fundamental restructuring beginning with a

foundational fix: imposing a hardened law-and-order apparatus.

By dismantling crime and extortion networks, it created the predictability essential for economic activity. This improved climate was aggressively marketed through high-profile Global Investors' Summits, translating policy into tangible project commitments worth lakhs of crores. The empirical evidence is compelling. Consider the lifeblood of any state: its own tax revenue. In the final year of the previous administration (2016-17), revenues from major heads like commercial tax, excise, and mining stood at approximately ₹86,000 crore. Within two years, this figure had catapulted to over ₹1.17 lakh crore — a striking 36 per cent surge. Mining revenues, a telling barometer of enforcement and formalisation, more than doubled. This is not mere collection; it is the conquest of a previously informal and leaky economy that had defied earlier Governments.

This revenue renaissance has been the engine for a broader economic resurgence. Uttar Pradesh's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has nearly doubled in nominal terms during this tenure, marking a clear acceler-

ation from the past. Most significantly, per capita income — the most poignant indicator of individual welfare — has witnessed a dramatic rise. From a meagre ₹55,398 in 2016-17, it has surged to an estimated ₹1,37,665 in 2023-24, and is projected to approach ₹1.8 lakh by 2025-26.

Critically, this macro-economic growth has translated into tangible poverty reduction at a historic scale. According to NITI Aayog, Uttar Pradesh achieved the fastest reduction in multidimensional poverty in the nation, lifting over 5.9 crore people out of deprivation between 2015-16 and 2019-21. The state's poverty rate plummeted from 37.68 per cent to 17.40 per cent, a direct outcome of the fiscal space that enabled expansive welfare programmes. This dramatic poverty reduction suggests that the benefits of growth are permeating the grassroots, positioning UP not as a recovered patient, but as the primary growth engine of India.

The most telling sign of this on-the-ground change is the reversal in migration patterns. The creation of local opportunities through industrial corridors and schemes like "One District, One Product" suggests that economic dignity is being

restored within the state's borders — a tangible outcome that eluded earlier Governments. This turnaround is neither accidental nor incidental. It is the deliberate outcome of a strategic triad — improved law and order, a massive infrastructure push, and a focused investment strategy — pursued with a consistency that distinguishes it from the patchy record of the past.

The construction of expressways, the revival of airports, and the careful curation of indigenous industries have not only generated immediate economic activity but have fundamentally rebranded the state. Uttar Pradesh has shed its "uninvestable" skin, emerging as an aspiring economic powerhouse with bold ambitions of becoming a \$1 trillion economy.

Yet, a revenue surplus is a testament to potential, not a validation of completion. It invites necessary scrutiny.

Despite its improved fiscal health, UP's human development indicators, though significantly improved, still lag behind national averages. The true test for the Government will be its next move: can it now deploy this fiscal space to turbocharge investment in human capital? Can the surplus be converted

into better schools, stronger healthcare, and higher-quality employment — the true foundation for a \$1 trillion economy?

For now, however, the fiscal metamorphosis is undeniable. The ledger books of Uttar Pradesh are unrecognisable from those of the past. In a political landscape often dominated by rhetoric, Yogi Adityanath has secured a formidable advantage: a story of tangible, quantifiable success. He has demonstrated that with political will and administrative focus, even the most daunting governance challenges can be surmounted. The journey from "Bimaru" to beacon is well underway. If this fiscal discipline can now be married to a mission of human development, Uttar Pradesh will not only have rewritten its own story but will have positioned itself as the undeniable engine of India's future. The paradox stands resolved: the firebrand priest has emerged as the state's most effective economic manager, turning fiscal despair into a miracle of governance.

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Science behind heat waves in West and cloudbursts in Asia

BY
BK SINGH

The planet is warming and as the evaporation from the surfaces of water bodies increases, so does the water-holding capacity of the warm air. Apart from plundering nature in the Himalayas, we must restrict further warming of the planet by transitioning away from fossil fuel consumption

While the IMD announced the retreat of the north-east monsoon of the season, Dehradun and Mandi experienced massive cloudbursts killing dozens of people and damaging buildings, roads and bridges. The hill town of Mussoorie remained cut off from Dehradun for over 48 hours. This monsoon, from Kullu to Kalimpong, Kishtwar to Karnaprayag, landslides, flash floods and ground subsidence sharpened the focus on how India's expanding infrastructure, like highways, tunnels, ropeways, and hydropower dams, is affecting the fragile Himalayan terrains.

Earlier, on 5th August, three dozen buildings of Dharali village near Gangotri in Uttarkashi were flattened in a flash flood within 20 seconds. The mudslide had hit an Army unit around 7 km downstream at Harshil, too. A massive mass of water and slush hit the

structures — hotels, homestays, guesthouses and houses — with enough energy to flatten them. Though Dharali received 33 mm of rain in 24 hours, heavy precipitation in the upper hill ranges/catchments brought down a heavy mass of slush and water. The average altitudinal difference between the place of such precipitation and Dharali is one km, and even 1000 tonnes of water and slush through this fall generates 10 gigajoules of energy, enough to flatten any structure on its way. The energy can be calculated using a simple physics formula of mass × acceleration due to gravity × altitudinal difference. Devbhumi has seen frequent cloudbursts in the recent past — the Kedarnath tragedy that claimed nearly 3000 lives in 2013, the unprecedented level of debris flow in Rishiganga and Dhauliganga in 2021 that killed over 200 workers stuck in the under-construction Tapovan-Vishnugad hydropower project, the havoc caused in Joshimath in 2023 and many more chilling reminders.

The Char Dham all-weather road widening project passes through the Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive Zone (BESZ). An area of 4157 sq km between Gangotri and Uttarkashi town, notified as BESZ is for the preservation of the river's ecology and watershed near its origin. In violation of BESZ protection norms, multistorey buildings and hotels are constructed in Maneri and Jamak villages near Uttarkashi on the bank of the river Ganga. The scrutiny

committee of BESZ has found that the valley's slopes are unstable and suggested an alternate design. The recent catastrophe is exactly as predicted by experts. The Uttarkashi-Gangotri NH widening project involves the felling of 13,000 trees in BESZ. There are 238 glaciers in BESZ and climate change is accelerating their retreat. Six thousand deodar trees in the stretch connecting Jhala and Gangotri have already been cut down and another 6000 are in the pipeline to face the axe. Besides tourism, the stated purpose of the wide roads is to augment defence supplies to the China border. Nevertheless, the entire Char Dham project should have been considered as one project of nearly 900 km of widening and in that scenario, an Environmental Impact Assessment could not have been avoided. Obtaining forest clearances on a piecemeal basis should also have been avoided, so that the trees axed/proposed to be axed are available in one place and the issue can be considered in totality.

The Supreme Court recently expressed concern over uncontrolled constructions and the inflow of tourists in Himachal Pradesh, saying that the day is not far off when the state will vanish from the map of the country. Revenue earning should not be the only criterion. The death of more than 300 people since 20th June in Himachal Pradesh due to flooding and landslides led to the state suspending any new construction without prior approval.

J&K also had its share

of tragedy in the season; landslides and flooding killed 46 pilgrims, injuring over 100, while another 100 went missing at Chishoti (90 km from Kishtwar). Several structures and vehicles were washed away in the flash flood. Pilgrims trek 8.5 km from Chishoti to the Machail Mata shrine. The yatra that commenced on 25th July was suspended after the tragedy. The camp set up for the pilgrims, including the community kitchen, was in the flood plain of the stream, and all structures, along with the people, were completely washed away. In a warming world, when cloudbursts and incessant rains are frequent and destructive, should the camp be set up in the floodplains of rivers and streams? A week later, flooding and landslides killed fifty people in Katra and the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine remained closed for pilgrims for 22 days.

Later, Punjab saw one of the worst floods in living memory. Two thousand three hundred villages in all 23 districts of the state were inundated, inflicting severe damage to roads, buildings, schools, hospitals and, most importantly, agricultural crops. Nearly one hundred persons perished in the flood and the cost of reconstruction — ₹12,000 crores — is the initial assessment, which is likely to go up in subsequent assessments when the flood recedes. The World Meteorological Department in a recent report has said, "The global water cycle has become extremely erratic and extreme with wild swings between droughts and floods, spelling big

trouble for economies and societies." While cloudbursts, flooding and landslides have caused havoc in Pakistan, India, Japan, China, Indonesia and many other South East Asian countries, the heatwaves and wildfires have engulfed European nations, mainly Spain, Portugal, Italy, Turkey, France etc. and even the US. A landslide wiped out a village in Sudan's Darfur, killing more than 1000 people.

The sudden stratospheric warming causes an Arctic jet stream collapse, resulting in the weakening and disruption of the Polar Vortex. This disruption allows frigid Arctic air to spill southward, causing cold outbreaks in the mid-latitude region, keeping the Arctic region warmer than average. In addition, Tropospheric Rossby Waves also propagate upwards into the stratosphere, causing the jet stream to break down. The ridges of the wavy jet stream push warm air northwards. A collapsing jet stream allows persistent high-pressure systems to bring extreme heat and drought in one region, and a 'trough' with a low-pressure system to bring torrential rains. This explains the heatwaves and wildfires in Europe and North America and extreme wet weather in India.

Westerly jet streams are fast-flowing air currents that blow from west to east. They are driven by the Earth's rotation and the temperature gradient between the poles and tropics. They bring western disturbances i.e. storms from the Mediterranean into northern India, causing rain and snow. During this year's monsoon sea-

son, the IMD repeatedly pointed out that there had been interferences between the westerly and the north-east monsoon, which have provided more favourable conditions for rainfall. The planet is warming and the evaporation from the surfaces of water bodies increases, as does the water-holding capacity of the warm air. Thus, an increased quantity of water is available in the form of clouds in the atmosphere. Whenever the conditions are favourable, such a huge quantity is dumped on the surface of the earth, which is understood as a cloudburst.

The Himalayas are younger mountains compared to mountains in central Indian landscapes and the Western Ghats and are more fragile and vulnerable to erosion and landslides. Streams and rivers can even change course and bring more surprises. The abrupt swelling of the Kheerganga river in Uttarkashi and its changing course along the path it had followed a hundred years ago led to the washing away of all structures along with humans. All the old courses of the river should be considered as flood plains and can at most be used for agriculture. No permanent structures, roads and bridges should be permitted in such areas. Apart from plundering nature in the Himalayas, we must restrict further warming of the planet by transitioning away from fossil fuel consumption.

The writer is retired Head of Karnataka Forest Force and presently teaches Economics in Karnataka Forest Academy