



PLUTUS IAS Weekly

CURRENT AFFAIRS



PLUTUS IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS 28-02-2022 to 06-03-2022

Basement C59 Noida, Opposite to Priyagold Building Gate, Sector 2, Pocket 1, Noida, Contact No.: 8448440231

www.plutusias.com



CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2022

GEO-SPATIAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE WATER SECTOR IN INDIA

India has a robust ecosystem in geospatial, with the survey of india ISRO, remote sensing applications centres and the national informatics centre in particular, and all ministries and department in general, using geospatial technology. As the severity of water crisis in India increases every year, central and state government agencies are using a variety of resources to tackle the water crisis. One among them is the adoption of geospatial technologies.

OVERVIEW OF WATER SECTOR IN INDIA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- **Demand-supply Mismatch** - India has about 17% of the world population but only about 4% of the world's freshwaters reserves and is currently facing a severe water challenge. Further, the total capacity of India's reservoir stands at 250 BCM while its total water bearing capacity over the surface is around 320 BCM.
- **Low rate of collection**- India receives 3000 Bcm water out of which only 8% is collected.
- **Over extraction and over reliance on groundwater**- India fills groundwater aquifers at the rate of 458 bcm per year, while it extracts around 650 BCM of water from the earth.
- **Water stress** – As per NITI AYOOG report, currently nearly 820 million people in 12 major river basins in India face extreme water stress.
- **Qualitative issues** – groundwater in 1/3rd of India's 600 districts is contaminated mainly through arsenic and fluoride.

ABOUT GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGIES : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Geospatial technology is a term used to describe the range of modern tools contributing to the geographic mapping and analysis of the earth and human societies.
- It is a collection of technology that helps to collect, analyse, store, manage and distribute, integrate and present Geographic info.
- It consists of Remote sensing, GIS, GNSS, survey, 3D modelling.
- It enables better measurement, management and maintenance of assets, monitoring of resources and even provides predictive and descriptive analysis forecasting and Planned intervention.

GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGY FOR WATER SECTOR : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Geospatial and digital technologies like Satellite Based Remote Sensing, GPS based treatment and sensors, AI, Big Data Analytics, 90T, 5G, Robotics and digital twin, Can be effectively used to combat the water crisis.

MAJOR ONGOING WATER PROJECT IN INDIA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Recognising the water crisis in India, Government of India formed a single ministry i.e Ministry of Jal Shakti previously it was dealt by almost nine Ministries.
- Jal Jeevan Mission, DRIP, Namami Gange, The national river linking project (NRLP), AMRUT, National hydrology program, PMKSY, National aquifer mapping program, River Basin Management, Atal Bhujal Yojana, National Water Mission.

WAY FORWARD

Long-term Geospatial Vision: In order to derive maximum benefit from geospatial technology implementation in various programmes, user dept need to build a long-term vision of the outcomes of geospatial implementation.

Integrated Geospatial Platform: An integrated collaborative platform to connect the data and Technology used by various organisations need to be developed for seamless access to info both locally and nationally and enable decision making.

Data & System Integration: Various data sets including demography, social-cultural, economic and other parameters need to be integrated with spatial and non spatial data related to water like soil, moisture, annual rainfall, rivers, aquifer, groundwater levels, water quality etc.

Anshum Verma

Significance and Need of Unfettered intellectual ambience : An analysis in changing political scenario on the occasion of National Science Day

CONTEXT :

- The Government is organizing a Science Week, 'Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate', as a prelude to National Science Day on February 28.
- In the Indian political scenario the free, intellectual ambience is not only the need of the country academically but also it is only tool which gives birth to free and logical thinking (scientific outlook) through which a nation can progress comprehensively

INTRODUCTION :

- 28th Feb is celebrated as the national Science day. On this occasion C. V Ram had invented the impact on the rays of light beam deflected from the molecules. The programme appears to have been designed to make youth be proud about India's scientific achievements.
- But we should know the real spirit of science which is to develop logical and critical thinking in a free atmosphere.
- In the present modern days, in the changing atmosphere of the political system, this is the big challenge to create and promote the atmosphere of free thinking. Because of greediness, fear and favor, our intellectuals generally deviate towards the will and ideology of the government or the respective authorities and compromise with logic and critical analysis.
- Using this opportunity as nationalistic mission is rather unfortunate. On the contrary, this event should be used to celebrate the true spirit of science that defies all types of intellectual curtailments, thus

promoting critical thinking in our academic centers.

WHAT IS THE SCIENCE AND SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Dissent is the soul of science.
- The scientific outlook seems like the rebellion outlook. Freeman Dyson in his book, *The Scientist as Rebel*, makes it very much clear that science is the mixture of two different opposite ideologies.
- Science is a mosaic of partial and conflicting visions. The common element after the analysis of two contradictory things is the science.
- This is not a western term. It is more Indian and Arab or Japanese or Chinese. Khayyam, a renowned Arab mathematician and astronomer wrote that science was a rebellion against the intellectual constraints of Islam.
- He further described science as a rebellion which he expressed more directly in his incomparable verses....”

SIGNIFICANCE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Free spirit of thinking is necessary for the comprehensive development of society. Dyson writes that “Science is an alliance of free spirits in all cultures rebelling against the local tyranny that each culture imposes on its children.”
- Galileo Einstein Nicolaus Copernicus is the person who dared to think freely and called the rebellion of the state, however they are now recognized by the world. And their free thinking brought the reforms in Europe which not only changed the picture of Europe but also the picture of the entire World. The one of the main reason of the prosperity of the Europe is only the Scientific outlook / atmosphere of the free thinking
- Development of the scientific outlook is maintained in our Fundamental Duties. R.A. Mashelkar, the Ex Director-General of the CSIR wrote in a journal issued by the CSIR in 2010 why India is unable to break the mediocrity barrier. He concludes that tradition-bound countries such as India need to free themselves from the cultural chains of the past to foster original thinking.
- We should develop the spirit of free thinking among our children also so that they would be helpful in the evolution of some ideas of the betterment of the society

CONCLUSION

- Indian intellectuals are sufficiently capable to develop scientific outlook among themselves as well as among the children of India. But some time, because of the fear and favor they slightly tilted towards the demand of the authority/ government and of the political party if they are associated with them.
- They Should overcome this type of the biasness. There is a huge need of the atmosphere in which the spirit of free thinking could be evolved so that the comprehensive development could be speeded up in a country.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

MONEY LAUNDERING: A GLOBAL CONCERN

The government informed the Supreme Court that 18,000 crore was confiscated under the Prevention of

Money Laundering Act (PMLA) from fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi, and returned to banks.

WHAT IS MONEY LAUNDERING?

- It is the process of making large amounts of money generated by criminal activity, such as drug trafficking or terrorist funding, appear to have come from a legitimate source.
- Criminal activities like illegal arms sales, smuggling, drug trafficking and prostitution rings, insider trading, bribery and computer fraud schemes produce large profits.
- Thereby it creates the incentive for money launderers to “legitimize” the ill-gotten gains through money laundering.
- The money generated is called ‘dirty money’ and money laundering is the process of conversion of ‘dirty money’, to make it appear as ‘legitimate’ money.

CHALLENGES

- Very small numbers of cases are being taken up for investigation under the PMLA as compared to annual registration of the cases under the Money Laundering Act in the UK (7,900), the U.S. (1,532), China (4,691), Austria (1,036), Hong Kong (1,823), Belgium (1,862) and Russia (2,764).
- Corruption in high offices is a major facilitator of money laundering.
- A United Nations report said that the proceeds of crime being laundered amount to \$2.1 trillion, which accounts for 3.67% of the global GDP.
- Three “supra-national or transnational” crimes which have brought together the global community are narcotics, money laundering and terrorism.
- People accused of money laundering run to small nations with no extradition treaty with India where they can buy citizenship.
- The national economy was the ultimate victim of money laundering, which affects all citizens alike.

CONSEQUENCES : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The possible consequences of money laundering, terrorist financing (TF), proliferation financing (the provision of funds or financial services for the acquisition of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons), and related crimes which undermine the integrity and stability of the financial sector and the broader economy.
- These crimes, as well as those underlying crimes that generate money laundering activity, can threaten the stability of a country’s financial sector and a country’s external stability more generally.
- This, in turn, can affect law and order, good governance, regulatory effectiveness, foreign investments and international capital flows.
- The social costs of money laundering include allowing drug traffickers, smugglers, and other criminals to expand operations and the transfer of economic power from the market, government, and citizens to criminals.
- In extreme cases, money laundering can lead to a complete takeover of a legitimate government.

EFFORTS FOR PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), a 39-member inter-governmental body established by the 1989 G7 Summit in Paris, has primary responsibility for developing the worldwide standards for Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism.

- The European Union, Council of Europe, Organisation of American States established anti-money laundering standards for their member countries.
- The Caribbean, Asia, Europe and southern Africa have created regional anti-money laundering task force-like organisations, and similar groupings are planned for western Africa and Latin America in the coming years.

INITIATIVES OF INDIA: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 was enacted in January 2003.
- It prescribes the obligation of banking companies, financial institutions and intermediaries for verification and maintenance of records of the identity of all its clients and also of all transactions and for furnishing information of such transactions in a prescribed form to the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND).
- It envisages the setting up of an Adjudicating Authority to exercise jurisdiction, power and authority conferred by it essentially to confirm attachment or order confiscation of attached properties.
- It also envisages the setting up of an Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against the order of the Adjudicating Authority and the authorities like Director FIU-IND.
- It envisages designation of one or more courts of sessions as Special Court or Special Courts to try the offences punishable under PMLA and offences with which the accused may, under the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973, be charged at the same trial.
- It allows the Central Government to enter into an agreement with the Government of any country outside India for enforcing the provisions of the PMLA, exchange of information for the prevention of any offence under PMLA or under the corresponding law in force in that country or investigation of cases relating to any offence under PMLA.

Anshum Verma

Russia Ukraine Crisis and India's national interest : An analysis in context to the steps by the government

CONTEXT:

Russia has declared a full fledged invasion over Ukraine and the Russian Ukraine war has been continuing for six days. India indirectly favored the steps of Russia against Ukraine and showed its traditional friendship with Russia but how far it is justified with the traditional value system of India's foreign policy of Non aggression. The foreign policy of any country is determined and influenced with the national interest of that country

INTRODUCTION:

There is no eternal friend and enemy in the international arena. The international relation continuously changes as per the interest of the nation. The identification of the national interest is the most essential requirement. The overall development of the Indian citizens is an eternal element of the National interest. Besides the following points are the elements and objectives of the national interest

- To conserve traditional value system
- Freedom and the sovereignty
- Unity and integrity

- Territorial security

The nature of the national interest is dynamic also. Presently, some new elements are also associated with the concept of National interest

- India's economic interest in abroad
- Many Indians are working in countries including America and Europe. Their security is also national interest
- Many Indians are studying in various countries of the world. Their interest and security is also a part of National interest
- The protection of the interest of the diaspora

WHY INDIA SUPPORT RUSSIA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

There are several factors for which India had to support Russia

- India is the traditional friend of Russia from the time of USSR
- Russia justified this invasion as she is finishing the neo Nazism which has evolved in Ukraine with the support of West
- India addressed several security interest of the Russia

HOW FAR THIS DECISION OF INDIA IS CORRECT : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- However, overall it seems the right decision of India for abstaining in the security council and supporting Russia indirectly. But up to a certain extent, it influences the interest of India. The Russian invasion is a violation of the BRICS resolution of New Delhi which was passed in the presence of Putin, Xi and Narendra Modi. Russia is the founding member of the BRICS, it means Russia is diluting the terms of the BRICS according to which no country can opt the path of aggression. The diluted terms of the BRICS would be dangerous for Indians because, in future the hostility of China would be increased.
- The decision of India may deteriorate the India US relation in future. Since Australia and Japan had also condemned the Russian aggression, therefore, India may face difficulties in QUAD.
- Because of the increasing hostility with China, India was looking towards Japan for the import of technology but after this steps of India, the bilateral relation of India and Japan may be deteriorated

HOW FAR IT IMPACTS THE INTEREST OF THE INDIA (NATIONAL INTEREST) : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- India, at any cost can not support any type of aggression because, India itself is the victim of Chinese infiltration in Ladakh. After the stand of India during the Ukraine Russian war, India had diluted the issue of Chinese infiltration.
- Secondly, many of the Indian Children /student are stuck in Ukraine, after some time, the European countries can deny to support India for the evacuation of Indians from Ukraine

WHAT SHOULD INDIA DO?

India is potentially capable of meeting this Chinese threat — a threat that is evident by China grabbing 50,000 square kilometers of Indian territory.

The potential strength of India can become actual capability with a little help from the United States. India should not be completely tilted towards Russia. Now the time has come that India should start gradually criticism of Chinese aggression simultaneously as well as the issue of POK

CONCLUSION

For India, the time is very crucial and India has to take any steps careful and balance. As per the predictions on the basis of the pattern of war, Russia could not get a satisfactory victory over Ukraine. Once Ukraine will recover its hold after the war with the support of the west but India would not be able to reinstall its relation with Ukraine and west like earlier one. Therefore India should not support in every affairs of the Russia blindly, In United Nation, India should raise the voice in the favor of the cease fire strongly and but simultaneously continuing its support to Russia regarding her security concern.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

KISAN DRONE

The Prime Minister of India flagged off 100 Kisan drones as a part of the “Drone Kisan Yatra” with the aim to promote chemical-free farming in India. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman first announced the initiative in her Budget speech earlier this month. Sitharaman added that inclusive drone development is one of the four priorities of the government moving forward.

WHAT IS A KISAN DRONE?

- It will have an unmanned tank filled with insecticides and nutrients.
- The drones are expected to have a high capacity of 5 to 10kg.
- The drone will spray the same amount of pesticide on about one acre of land in just 15 minutes.
- The drones have been manufactured by Chennai-based Garuda Aerospace, a home-grown start-up.

EXPECTED IMPLICATIONS OF THE MOVE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- This will save time, will require less effort and spraying will be done uniformly.
- They will also be used to carry vegetables, fruits, fish, etc to the markets from the farms.
- These items will be supplied directly to the market with minimal damage, consuming lesser time, resulting in more profits to farmers and fishermen.
- The development of these drones on a large scale is expected to bring new employment opportunities for the youth.
- Kisan drones will be used for crop assessment, digitization of land records, and spraying of insecticides and nutrients.
- Kisan Drones will be used to boost the agricultural sector in the country, the use of Kisan Drones will be promoted for crop assessment, digitization of land records and spraying of insecticides and nutrients.
- This step was taken as the government aims to promote chemical-free national farming.
- Kisan Drone will usher in a new edge revolution as high capacity drones will be used to carry vegetables, fruits, fishes to the market directly from the farms. “These items will be supplied directly to the market with minimal damage, consuming lesser time, resulting in more profits to farmers and fishermen,”
- The development of the drone market in India will generate fresh employment and new opportunities for the youth.

ISSUES /CHALLENGES : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Initial Cost: Mostly, agricultural drones used for surveying have fixed wings and may cost very high

based on features and sensors necessary for executing their intended use.

- **Connectivity:** Online coverage is mostly unavailable in arable farms. Under such a situation, any farmer intending to use drones has to invest in connectivity or buy a drone with local data storing capability in a format that can be transferred and processed later.
- **Weather Dependent:** Under windy or rainy conditions, flying drones is not easy, unlike traditional aircraft. Drones are weather dependent.
- **Knowledge and Skill:** An average farmer cannot analyze drone images as it requires specialised skills and knowledge to translate them into any useful information.
- **Misuse:** There is a chance of misuse to infringe the privacy of people and illegal transfer of information.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The Union Budget 2022-23 announced a special push for Kisan (farmer) drones.
- The Union Agriculture Ministry has amended the guidelines of the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation to provide subsidies to rural entrepreneurs and farmer producer organisations for purchasing drones.
- **Drone Rules 2021:** Ministry of Civil Aviation has published 'Drone Rules 2021' to regulate the use and operation of Drones in India. Today Current Affairs.
- The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, (Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare) in consultation with all the stakeholders of this sector, has brought out Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for use of drones in pesticide and nutrient application that provides concise instructions for effective and safe operations of drones.
- India banned the import of foreign drones except those used for research and development, defence and security.

CONCLUSION

- The digital revolution is touching every sphere of life and hence it is high time to bring agriculture in its ambit.
- The emphasis on digital infrastructure for infusion of agriculture technologies in a PPP mode will be the need of the hour in the next 25 years to combat the serious threat of climate change, Kisan drones' are the beginning of a new revolution.
- Farmers can use high-capacity drones in the coming times to transport their produce like fruits, vegetables and flowers to markets in a minimal time, boosting their income.
- The drones would go a long way in addressing the acute labour shortage faced by farmers, especially paddy growers.
- The government needs to frame policies, install infrastructure to keep a tab on the drones and put in place policies for opening up the sector.

Anshum Verma

Russia-Ukraine Conflict and India's abstention on UNSC vote

WHY IN NEWS?

The US has moved a resolution in UNSC against Russia's aggression over Ukraine but India has abstained from voting mentioning that dialogue is the only answer to settle disputes.

ABOUT RESOLUTION:

- US and Albania along with several other countries presented a resolution in UNSC to deplore Russia's aggression against Ukraine which highlighted that Russia should immediately stop using its force against Ukraine and also it should refrain from using force against any UN member state.
- The resolution further expressed its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.
- Russia chaired the meeting and China along with the UAE abstained from voting.
- Although all the remaining members voted in favour of the resolution but it could not pass as Russia vetoed it.

INDIAN ABSTENTION AND REASONS BEHIND: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- If India would have condemned Russian aggression then it would have placed India against Russia.
- If India would have supported Russian aggression then it would have placed India against the U.S. and its allies.
- If India would have maintained silence on Russian aggression then it would have been considered as pro-Russia move
- Fourth option was to express displeasure and call for diplomacy which is least harmful, so India followed it.
- India followed this path as it wants to maintain a balance between the Western bloc and Russia.
- India appealed for cessation of violence and expressed that it is disturbed by the reversal of developments in Ukraine.
- It expressed concern for Indian nationals in Ukraine and advocated for negotiations.
- Russia is also India's most trusted P-5 ally in blocking intrusive resolutions on Kashmir.
- Further India needs Russia's assistance in defence supplies, help in returning to central Asia, searching avenues and collaborating in Afghanistan.

WHETHER INDIA WAS UNDER DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Just before the United Nations Security Council's draft resolution against the Russian invasion, India was caught in a diplomatic tussle between the Western powers and Russia.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had telephonic conversations with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, insisting that dialogue and diplomacy are the best way forward to defuse the Ukraine crisis.

The Ambassadors of European countries in India got together in New Delhi and expressed solidarity with their Ukrainian counterpart and strongly condemned Russia's "unprovoked and unjustified" military attack on Ukraine. A day before, British and EU Foreign ministers had also called up Jaishankar, while ambassadors of G-7 countries had expressed support for the Ukrainian ambassador.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN ACTION: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The current situation has necessitates that India balances the Western bloc and Russia

The India position has shown that when it comes to geopolitics, It will choose interests over principles.

India has been in touch with all sides, urging the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table. By abstaining, India retained the option of reaching out to relevant sides in an effort to bridge the gap and find a middle ground with an aim to foster dialogue and diplomacy.

But now India has to consider how its aspirations to become a leading power can be realized without taking a clear stand in a conflict that threatens global security.

Vivek Raj

Evaluation of operation Ganga : Need of clear evacuation policy of India at the time of emergency

CONTEXT:

During the Russian Ukrainian War, thousands of Indians are stuck in Ukraine. However, the Government had started the operation Ganga to evacuate the Indians from Ukraine. But This operation is also not free from criticism. Opposition political party leaders are continuously raising the questions regarding its delay. There are not any clear instructions and strategy regarding evacuations of Indians. India is not facing the problem of evacuation for the first time. In the past we successfully operated such an evacuation operation during the Gulf war.

INTRODUCTION

During the Russia Ukraine war, now we feel the need for a clear evacuation policy. Presently, however the government is doing its best effort to evacuate Indians from the war zone of the Ukraine but still the government has to face many problems in this operation Ganga which has been started by the government for the evacuation of Indians.

WHAT IS OPERATION GANGA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Operation Ganga is an ongoing operation started by the government of India by 28th Feb 2022 for evacuating India from the nearby countries of the Ukraine (western border) during the Russia Ukraine war. It will last up to 8th march 2022. The total cost is predicted for this operation is 1.1 crore Indian missions in the neighboring countries like Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary announced to make arrangements to receive Indian nationals from Ukraine and fly them out of their respective countries under Operation Ganga flights. The cost will be borne by the Center. The cost is expected to increase as the condition of the war is going to worst

WHAT IS THE EVACUATION : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Definition

The basic meaning of the evacuation is a facility of exiting and safely as possible from the point of the emergency

Evacuation is appropriate when conditions inside a structure pose a threat to the health and safety of building

occupants and leaving the facility is safer than remaining inside of it. Evacuation should occur through the closest exit way

STRATEGIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE EVACUATION : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

India has to operate many operation in past related to evacuation where the following strategies were adopted

- Exit the premises through the nearest exit.
- Exit immediately, do not return for personal items.
- If possible, inform others of the evacuation.
- If possible, help others evacuate.
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
- Use the safest evacuation route possible.
- Avoid coming in contact with the hazard (fire, suspicious package, violent intruder, etc.).
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the hazard may be.

ASSEMBLY LOCATIONS

After evacuating, you should report to a pre-designated assembly area and wait for further instruction. Assembly areas are designated locations where a headcount can be taken or emergency officials can debrief regarding the incident.

WHAT IS THE EVACUATION POLICY OF INDIA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

There is no fixed evacuation policy in India. But many times in the past India had to operate these evacuation operations. one of the largest evacuation operation was run during the time of gulf war in which more than 175000 Indians were evacuated

EVACUATION IN PAST : TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

India has been evacuated from Yemen in view of civil disturbances in 2009-10. The Embassy of India, Sana'a (Yemen) arranged the exit visas for those who are staying without proper documentation in Yemen.

Due to the turmoil in Egypt during January-February, 2011. Before that, in 1990, India evacuated approx. 190000 Indians during the gulf war.

In the past Air India arranged three special flights, on a 'no profit' basis. Around 670 Indians availed of these special Air India flights to return to India. As the situation deteriorated in Libya, more than 16,200 Indian nationals desirous of returning to India were evacuated from Libya by all means, i.e. by air, sea, and land.

FUND ALLOCATED FOR THE EVACUATION OF INDIANS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

There is a fund called The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) for such types of operations. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) was set up in 2009. The objective of this fund is to provide assistance to those Indians who are residing in abroad in times of distress and emergency in the 'most deserving cases' on a 'means tested basis'

ICWF has also been a critical support in emergency evacuation of Indian nationals from conflict zones, countries affected by natural disasters and other challenging situations. In view of its immense utility, ICWF stands extended to all Indian Missions and Posts abroad.

The Missions will have the following source of funding: Funds raised by the Indian Missions by levying a

service charge on Consular Services as under: (i) For Passport, Visa, OCI and PIO Cards – RS. 100/-per document rounded off in local currency.

SUGGESTION AND THE NEED OF CLEAR EVACUATION POLICY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

In the lack of clear evacuation policy of the government this time students studying in Ukraine are facing the problem. Government could not decide about evacuation before 12th Feb 2022 however many countries had issued advisory before 12th Feb when the situation in Ukraine had started to deteriorate. In the lack of a fixed and clear evacuation policy, this time, the operation Ganga has had several difficulties. This situation is not the last situation. Government has to form a fix evacuation policy for which there must be clear instructions and the procedure of the evacuation and in any country government should execute evacuation policy before the time starts to deteriorate

CONCLUSION

As per the above discussion, Operation Ganga, an evacuation operation, is going on in Ukraine to evacuate our citizens from Ukraine in such a dangerous situation. In fact there is a failure of the government that the government could not launch this operation earlier because of the lack of clear evacuation policy. But after the Russian invasion, the Government started this operation Ganga. Definitely the Government should start this operation in the first week of the February 2022 when the situation is tending towards the worst. The government should not wait for the worst situation. Anyway, we all pray for the success of this operation Ganga so that our students could bring India safely; however we have lost the life of one student.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

Need of the development of the modern Science : An essential element for the overall development of the country

CONTEXT:

In election-obsessed India, there is hardly any time to discuss the advances of modern science and the repercussions

INTRODUCTION :

- In India, we see there are various elections conducted almost every month (elections of the provincial government, elections of the panchayat and other civil elections) and our leaders who spend their maximum time in those elections. Despite spending our maximum time on elections in India, we should spend more time discussing the advances of modern science and their repercussions for public life. There have been such fascinating developments in science and in technology, such as in artificial intelligence, but these have merely been reported and then have quietly faded from public view.
- We know this fact very well, science is not only essential to our daily life but also it is important for our power. The development of science in an ethical framework is required for the overall development of the country. therefore it should be discussed countrywide but this is our misfortune that we prefer the elections more in comparison to the other constructive activities. The Hindu Analysis.
- The Need of the development on medical science is also required In modern days, science is essential for the development of society. However, the debate of the development of medicine and the medical science is required

In foreign countries, the development in the health sector, mainly in Africa is appreciable. In America the research of the kidney transplant from animal to human is very appreciable and the society is not only supporting the medical research but also they came forward strongly for such development

There are various reports published on January 14, 2022, from the University of Maryland where a team of doctors used the heart of an animal, which had genetically modified features, as a replacement heart on a patient who had run out of available options. By all accounts the operation seems to have been successful.

MORAL AND SOCIAL ISSUE: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Actually, there are various ethical issues regarding the development of medical science that should be discussed properly. In foreign countries the animals are being used for the research and experiment but in India it is very difficult to use animals for the research and development in the medical field because of the several rights of the animals also.

Our constitution also encourages the development of the scientific temper. (Article 51 A). But since animal right movements abstract such development we should come forward to discuss freely in this regard so that we could also learn about stems from a philosophy of anthropocentrism which places human beings at the center of nature and regards all other living creatures as having only value if they can be of use to humans.

Animal rights are also related with our value system but we should be more human centric

CONCLUSION:

The development of science is not only essential for the well-being of humans only but also for the well being of the entire nation. The government should think in this regard carefully. Despite being more involved in the elections, our senior leaders should show at least little concern regarding the development of science and technology. Here it should not be argued that elections should be curtailed or only one time election should be conducted. Democracy is also essential for the development of free scientific thinking. Hence, our central level or leaders of high level should not be concerned only on the election, even the election of the local level. Democracy, scientific development, social value system and the ethical value system, all are essential to flourish in a free atmosphere.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

ASHA workers and their neglected state

Over 10 lakh rural and urban “ASHA” (accredited social health activists) workers whose role in the pandemic has been acknowledged from all quarters, locally and internationally, continue to be sidelined. Their demand for the recognition of their work in their role as community health workers is deliberately pushed aside by a state system that appears to be thriving on the free labour of women workers, be it in the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), the Midday Meal Scheme or the National Health Mission. It is therefore not surprising that ASHA workers are now on a warpath, continuously organizing several protest programmes in different states even as the pandemic rages around them, because they continue to face an indifferent administration and a callous government that does not care to remunerate them properly for their labour.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The pandemic is far from over, and nobody can hazard a guess about when it will eventually phase out. The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and the Disaster Management Act, 2005 continue to be in operation and are being invoked to justify all kinds of government decisions as well as restrict public behavior. Yet, in

September 2021, the government in all its wisdom chose to withdraw the meager COVID-19 risk allowance of `1,000 that was announced as a compensation for ASHA workers.¹ It was restored, albeit for another six months (up to March 2022) only when they protested about it on Human Rights Day on 10 December 2021.²

CASE OF NEGLECT : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

It was stated in Parliament that till January 2021, 44 ASHA workers died due to the virus (Rajya Sabha 2021); however, the numbers could be higher. In September 2020, of the 155 settled COVID-19 claims for the `50 lakh compensation on account of death announced by the government, only 14 were of ASHA workers (Rajya Sabha 2020). But even those who simply needed medical attention got none, like the case in Bihar, where many ASHA workers who tested COVID-19 positive got no treatment from the state government's public health services (Madhav and Gurmat 2021). Worse, many have reported that they did not even get the mandatory protective equipment of masks and sanitisers for doing their duty or even if they did that it was a one-off gesture—this while the same authorities imposed stringent fines for lapses in respect to COVID-19 safety protocols.

In many places the trade unions of ASHA workers have had to step in to demand priority vaccinations for them, even though they are a critical link in the entire pandemic control strategy of the governments at both the central and state levels. At best, since 2018 they are reimbursed for any premium that is deducted from their bank accounts for the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (death benefit of `2 lakh) and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (accidental death/disability benefit of up to `2 lakh).

FULL-TIME DISGUISED AS 'VOLUNTARY' : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The answer obviously lies in the gendered nature of the work done by ASHA workers coupled with the tendency of the neo-liberal state to reduce its expenditure, especially social sector spending, as we have witnessed in our country for the last several years. The ASHA workers are essentially a part of the care work sector, providing a crucial link between the community and the public health system in both rural and urban areas.

The guidelines issued when the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was first set up in 2005 describe the role and responsibility of an ASHA worker—the ASHA will be a health activist in the community who will create awareness on health and its social determinants and mobilize the community towards local health planning and increased utilization and accountability of the existing health services; creating awareness, counseling women and escorting them to the nearest health facility for treatment; providing primary medical care and first aid and acting as a depot for a basic drug kit; mobilizing the community and facilitating their access to local health and related services; providing information on births, deaths and unusual diseases; and, helping to develop a village-based comprehensive health plan are the primary responsibilities laid out for them in the document.

There are some fundamentally contentious issues in these arrangements that are now emerging with greater severity with the expansion of the scope and outreach of the NHM across the country. Counseling, creating awareness and even facilitating access to local health facilities may be tasks that could be done by any citizen helping their fellow citizens and could be counted as “voluntary.” But the actual task list and the coordination expected with other health staff is quite specific and requires the ASHA worker to not just devote a considerable amount of time, but also adhere to a particular timetable that goes far beyond the framework of voluntary services.

CONTINUED PRECARIETY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Class, caste (a majority are from underprivileged caste backgrounds) and patriarchy combine to produce a unique hierarchy where ASHA workers are at the bottom of the heap. It is not just that they are not paid or

poorly paid for their 24×7 services. They are not even extended common courtesy such as a place to sit in the PHC or local hospital; they are often asked to do menial tasks, face physical and mental abuse and are at times forced to part with their meager earnings with corrupt health staff members. The lack of status and indignities they face are a direct product of the “nature” of their work and the fact that they are “poor women” workers with few options.

WORKING STRUGGLE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

It is therefore to the credit of the ASHA workers, that despite these systemic odds, they have launched a determined struggle for recognition of their work as productive labour worthy of proper wages and status as workers. The last few years have seen struggles of ASHA workers to draw attention to the sheer neglect and discrimination faced by them, despite their stellar role in improving the delivery of health services to some of the poorest and deprived sections of our society. However, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance-I government reneged on its promise made in 2009 to pay a fixed honorarium (Nirula 2015). Several ground level protest actions combined with the initiative of the central trade unions resulted in the tripartite 45th Indian Labour Conference convened in May 2013 to recommend that workers in different central and state government schemes, including ASHA workers, The Hindu Analysis.

This positive direction is sought to be turned around by the labour codes being pushed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government that do not even mention them as a category of employees; something that requires consideration for the application of protective labour legislation such as minimum wages and social security.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

They are organizing into trade unions and pushing demands for minimum wages, social security, and dignity. The inherent insecurity of their job and its precarious nature poses challenges to organizing, as also their lack of resources due to their poor and marginalized socio-economic background. Efforts to mobilise and organise are met with threats of privatisation or dismissal. But the “worker consciousness” that is being built through the process of organising has led to an understanding that it is only the recognition of their work as productive care “work” and the status of workers that will lead to an improvement in their conditions.

The ASHA workers’ unions are today one of the most militant organisations of women and form a substantial part of the trade union movement in the country. They have supported the farmers’ struggle and have supported the demand for the withdrawal of the intolerable labour codes brought by the BJP government. Some of their major actions have been two national strikes, in August 2020 and September 2021 (along with other scheme workers⁵), and consistent participation from all states in the general strike calls of the central trade unions. In another national strike scheduled for 28–29 March 2022, they have called for a permanency of their mission and a universal legislation guaranteeing the right to healthcare, a minimum wage of `21,000, pension of `10,000 per month, an additional COVID-19 risk allowance of `10,000 per month, and continued insurance coverage (All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers [CITU] 2021). Even in this third wave of COVID-19 they are determined to bring their struggle to the streets. Nobody can stop their march forward.

Ritu

Biological Diversity Act, 2002 – impact and challenges

The biodiversity management committees (BMCs) have been constituted in local bodies across the length and breadth of the country under the provisions of the national Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and relevant

state rules enacted under it. The act gives effect to India's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) of 1992 to which it is a party, and the act's objectives mirror the three goals of the CBD, namely the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources and associated knowledge.

While primarily responsible for the preparation of peoples' biodiversity registers (PBRs) containing comprehensive knowledge on the availability and knowledge of local biological resources, their medicinal, or any other use or associated traditional knowledge, the BMCs also have important functions in determining access and benefit-sharing (ABS), including the power to levy collection fees on the access of biological resources within its jurisdiction. BMCs are, thus, key to the realisation of the objectives of the Nagoya Protocol (2010), negotiated within the CBD, enjoining parties to take measures to ensure that benefits from the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge accrue to indigenous and local communities on mutually agreed terms.

With many BMCs remaining merely on paper, challenges in ensuring effective functioning of the BMCs have been reported in almost all states, attributed primarily to the lack of funding and capabilities and the inability to generate own funds (Kohli and Bhutani 2014; Tandon 2017). While the NBA tried to provide a set of minimum guiding principles for the operationalisation of the BMCs in 2014, states adopted different strategies to circumvent the challenges. For instance, Kerala—which had become the first state in the country to constitute BMCs in all its local bodies—ensured that the respective BMCs were chaired by the chairperson of the local body, with the secretary of the latter being the BMC's ex officio member secretary, to ensure local ownership of the BMCs

MP's PIONEERING INITIATIVES : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Madhya Pradesh (MP) has been a leader in biodiversity governance since the late 1990s, much before it became a part of the statutory obligations mandated by the 2002 act. Some of the foundational initiatives taken up far ahead of the times by MP—a precursor to the PBRs—were (i) the constitution of the “Madhya Pradesh Biodiversity Board” in 1999, (ii) the creation of a separate department of biodiversity and biotechnology in 2001, (iii) the preparation of the biodiversity strategy and action plan through a participatory process in 2002, and (iv) a first-of-its-kind effort in Seoni to incorporate biodiversity concerns in district developmental planning as well as preparation of jal-jangal-jameen registers at the gram panchayat level. It has also been commended for its efforts to make the documentation exercise participatory, involving marches or jathas to sensitise local people organised by the local NGOs with support from the state forest department (Gadgil 2006). The state also took the lead by promptly notifying the Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Rules in 2004, almost co-terminus with the notification of the national Biological Diversity Rules, 2004 to give effect to the 2002 act, and the constitution of the Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board (MPSBB) under the aforesaid state rules in 2005.

CHALLENGES IN THE BMCs : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Despite the success stories, MP continues to face challenges in keeping the BMCs active and operational. This comes out strongly in the findings of the study conducted by the author based on field-level insights from 23 BMCs across five eco-regions and seven districts of MP, both old, well-established BMCs as well as relatively new BMCs, and JFMC-cum-BMCs.

The state has a few BMCs that are more than a decade old, such as the Pithorabad BMC in Satna district, the Langadiya Dhansura Bamsoli, Piprai, and Jabrol BMCs in Morena, which have prepared their PBRs long back with the help of local NGOs and master trainers of the MPSBB. Interactions with BMC members indicated considerable awareness about their roles and responsibilities and deep pride in the rewards and recognition received for their work on biodiversity conservation.

Despite their achievements, these BMCs face many challenges such as the lack of sustained funds for their work, the inability to generate funds of their own by collecting access fees, and the lack of requisite infrastructure such as dedicated office space.

A MULTIPRONGED APPROACH FOR THE FUTURE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

MP has achieved full compliance with the NGT directive with the constitution of BMCs and preparation of PBRs in all its local bodies along with the constitution of JFMC-cum-BMCs. However, as the long experience of biodiversity governance in the state indicates, several challenges exist in sustaining the BMCs over time. This is compounded by the sheer geographical size and a huge number of local bodies in the state, which imposes unprecedented challenges in constitution, reconstitution, and building capacities faced nowhere else in the country.

It is indeed laudable that MP (and particularly the MPSBB) has shown unflinching commitment towards empowering the BMCs in the state and has been proactive in identifying the challenges and taking steps to address the same. Demonstrating policy responsiveness, the state has gone about amending the Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Rules in 2019 to reconstitute the JFMCs as JFMC-cum-BMCs, a step much in line with the operationalisation guidelines of the NBA with the expectation that the JFMCs—which have relatively robust functioning in the state under the mentorship of the forest department and performing related functions at the ground level—could be harnessed to serve as the BMCs. Considering the centrality of the funds for sustaining the work of the BMCs over time, the MPSBB has tried to build up a robust ABS regime through additional regulatory measures adopted in the exercise of powers conferred by the rules.

Bio-finance has also assumed centre stage in the Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (MPSBS and AP) for 2018–30 brought out in 2020. The priority strategies to be adopted for strengthening bio-finance in the state include strengthening the ABS mechanism, putting in place separate biodiversity budget heads in all relevant sectors, ensuring convergence with relevant government schemes, and other innovative financing mechanisms. The MPSBB has tried to channel funds from the Green India Mission and the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority for the preparation of PBRs and capacity building of the BMCs (as per the information provided by MPSBB).

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The BMCs also need to be supported with funds and technical assistance for taking up biodiversity-based livelihood interventions. In line with the rich biological wealth of the state, the cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants conservation of local varieties of wheat, rice, maize, pulses, minor millets, fruits, vegetables, etc, conservation of native breeds of livestock and poultry, organic farming along with value addition could be the key strategies for ensuring ecological security and dealing with the effects of climate change as well as achieving livelihood security of its people, particularly, its large population of Scheduled Tribes with a high dependence on bio-resources.

A multipronged strategy and an enabling policy and legal environment would thus be critical in creating empowered, self-sustaining, and self-reliant Atmanirbhar BMCs in the state, which would also be central to the realisation of the goals of the CBD, climate justice, and many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ritu

The IPCC Report

WHY IN NEWS?

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) has analyzed and reviewed the present and future man-made impacts of climate change and has a message that is terrible in nature.

ABOUT THE IPCC REPORTS: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The aim of the IPCC is to provide governments at all levels with the scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies and programs.
- The IPCC's Assessment Reports are the most comprehensive evaluations of the state of the earth's climate.
- The latest report talks about the impacts of climate change impacts, risks and vulnerabilities and adaptation options.
- For the first time, the IPCC report has highlighted the health impacts of climate change.
- It was identified that the rise in weather and climate extremes has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt.
- Further it was noted that most of the targets that countries have set for themselves are too far in the future to have an impact in the short term.

INDIAN CASE: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- India's assurance at the COP26 summit that it will achieve net zero emissions latest by 2070.
- And by 2030, India will ensure that 50% of its energy will be from renewable energy sources.

SPECIFICATIONS OF THE REPORTS: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The major point of emphasis of the report, particularly for South Asia, is the trend in the wet bulb temperature.
- Patna and Lucknow were among the cities predicted to reach wet-bulb temperatures of 35°C while Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Mumbai, Indore, and Ahmedabad are at risk of reaching wet-bulb temperatures of 32°C-34°C with continued emissions.
- This will be having consequences such as a rise in heat-wave linked deaths or reduced productivity.
- The Global sea levels are likely to rise 44 to 76 cm in this century if governments match their current emission-cutting pledges.
- With the higher emissions, and if ice sheets collapse more quickly than expected, sea levels could rise as much as 2 metres in this century and 5 metres by 2150.
- By the mid of the century, approx 35 million people could face annual coastal flooding, with 45 million-50 million at risk by the end of the century if emissions are high.
- The Extreme weather led to cereal production loss of 9-10 % (1964-2007).
- The rice production in India may decrease by 30% and maize production will decrease 70%, if global warming over pre-industrial levels rises to 4°C from 1°C, the IPCC analysis found.
- The Evidence of floods on food production was limited, according to the report.
- The impact of drought on food security has been highlighted by the report but also cautioned that overall irrigation water demand would increase by 2080.

- The Fisheries, aquaculture and crop production, particularly in south and southeast Asia, may decline as a result of climate change.
- The Current global crop and livestock areas will increasingly become climatically unsuitable under a high emission scenario in major food-producing regions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REPORT: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The IPCC reports form the scientific basis on which countries across the world build their policy responses to climate change.
- These reports do not suggest to the countries or governments what to do and are only meant to present factual situations with scientific evidence.
- With respect to regional and sectoral impacts, Report presents actionable intelligence, particularly for countries that lack the resources or the capacity to make their own impact assessments.
- These findings are the product of the combined understanding of the largest group of experts on climate science that lends it credibility greater than any individual study.
- This report also forms the basis for international climate change negotiations that decide on the responses at the global level such as the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol.

Vivek Raj

Russia Ukraine War : An effort to reinstall the old regime of the great Russian Empire

CONTEXT:

Entire world is being influenced by the Russian Ukrainian War. Thousands of the foreigners are stuck in the war zone of the Ukraine and their countries are trying to evacuate them from the war zone. Russia also has to face a huge economical crisis in future. Definitely there was a big and significance concern of Russia regarding her own security so it had to fight this war

INTRODUCTION:

The Ukraine-Russian war should not be seen in a single frame of reference which has been set up by the western media. There are several causes behind the Russian invasion over Ukraine which have existed in the history of Russia. However modern causes are also significant causes but these modern concerns are highly influenced and inspired from the glory of the great Russian empire of Slav race. During the 17-18th centuries, Russia was one of the largest empires of the world and the glory of Russia had reached its zenith during the regime of Catherine. however she was influenced by the Renaissance thinkers and because of their influence she brought drastic reform in their country.

ABOUT THE PERIOD OF CATHERINE

Russian Princess Catherine was from a poor German family and married to Peter of Russia. She grew up in Russia and Germany under the atmosphere of conspiracies and the conflict for power. She, however, brought drastic reforms in administration for the public welfare but still she strengthened her dictatorship and established the rule of law strictly.

She believed in the imperialism approach. She expanded her state beyond the Ural mountain along with the

Caspian sea and up to the northern shore of black Sea by conquering the Crimea Peninsula (1783). Under her regime, Russia not only benefited with the expansion of trade and commerce but also with annexation of many disintegrated states of the ottoman empire. She promoted large-scale foreign colonization and peasant resettlement in the south. Under her regime, she not only settled new towns like Odessa, Kherson, Nikolayev Taganrog and Mariupol (All are in modern Ukraine) but also developed through the establishment of educational institutions. Gradually these towns became the center of Russian culture, contributing to the reorientation of Russia's pattern of trade with the development of agricultural exports from Russia (Modern Ukraine). Local society was transformed on the Russian pattern. Landlords on a large scale were involved in Russian elites.

Integration of the new region brought the problem of minorities who were from the different cultures (Non Russian). She tried to culturize Non Russian culture and up to maximum extent she had succeeded but in the region of Siberia, certain evidence of the cultural conflict exists.

Up to the Crimean war (1853), Russia had strengthened her states which could not be tolerated by the western countries and from then, these countries are continuously trying to disintegrate Russia with the support of Turkey.

Up to the time of the formation of the USSR in 1917 (With Bolshevik Revolution of October) the territory of Russia had extended more than 6,800 miles (10,900 kilometers) from east to west, covering 11 of the world's 24 time zones. The most westerly point was on the Baltic sea and the easternmost was Cape Dezhnev on the Berlin Strait nearly halfway around the world.

It extended from Cape Chelyuskin to Kushaka (From North to south) Nearly half of the territory of the U.S.S.R. was north of 60° N, at the same latitude as Alaska, Baffin island and Greenland. Approx. 78 % of the population of the USSR was from the Slav tribe (As per the census of the USSR in 1990s). Almost all Ukrainian are from Slavs ethnics group.

Therefore, emotional attachment of the Ukrainian should be closer to Russian, not to western countries







THE AMBITIOUSNESS OF PUTIN

Putin again thinks to reinstall the old Russian regime and all the Slavs under a single political authority. gradually he has shown his objective. However he has declared the reason for his invasion is to ensure his territorial security from the west (NATO). But the similarities of the race and the old great Russian history definitely would have been one of the reason of the Russian invasion on Ukraine

CONCLUSION

The interest of Ukraine should exist in Russia rather than western countries. These Countries are capitalist in nature and have been involved in economical exploitation of the Asian and African countries in the name of democracy and the expansion of civilization. Ukraine and the Ukrainian must understand this fact that the culture and ethnics similarities are the most important tool for emotional attachment. Therefore the interest of Ukraine lies in the interest of Russia. Since Russia is a big country and will never tolerate that her disintegrated country would go in the camp of her permanent rival who had always tried to defeat and subjugate Russia.

Here, these days, the west is provoking Ukraine continuously but who is being influenced with the evil effect of the war- Only one culture is Slavs / Russian (either from Ukraine or from Russia) as well as Indian type countries who have been victims of colonialism for a long time and who are being benefited – only Western countries, by selling their arms to Ukraine and giving loans.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

Contract labour system – loopholes and achievements

In India, contract labourers are protected by the Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act, 1970. A contract labourer is defined in the Act as one who is hired in connection with the work of an establishment

by a principal employer through a contractor. Contract labour forms a large chunk of employment in industries in India. Their presence is not only there in the informal sector but also in the formal sector. As per the Annual Survey of Industries, from 2008–09 to 2017–18, the number of persons employed through contractors increased from 2.7 million to 4.4 million. In formal establishments, this workforce is supposed to be deployed in peripheral and seasonal jobs; however, this is often violated with establishments deploying them in core and perennial activities and thereby violating the principle of “equal pay for equal work.” This segment of workers has also gained traction because it provides flexibility to organisations, making it easier to focus on its core activities. The integrity of this argument is, however, under contention. In a neo-liberal, competitive market, the contract labour system is seen as a cost-cutting strategy by organisations whereby the contract labourers are employed without the traditional rights and support systems available to their regular employed counterparts.

CONTRACT LABOUR IN MINES

In the iron ore mines, data shows that as of 1 August 2021, there were 618 contract labourers employed apart from the 566 regular employees in the mines. The total labour force includes both executives and non-executives employed directly in the mines. These contract labourers were employed through a total of 32 contractors registered with the mines. The CLRA mentions that the contract of employment for contract labour should be for a specific period. This fixed duration ensures non-continuity of services, which has bearing for regularisation of the workers and attracts payment of gratuity. We observed, the contractors maintain long standing relations with the establishment owing to the renewable nature of contracts. Most contract labourers, if not all, remain engaged with the company for years in this system.

Further, due to the region’s geographical nature, weak connectivity with other places, distance to the nearest labour office, and absence of other employment opportunities, workers remain bound with the company. There also exists the problem of awareness of their rights among the contract labourers. It is also important to note that there are no trade unions for the contract labourers to raise their issues; however, specific issues like timely payment of wages, safety aspects of labourers, etc, are taken up by some of the trade unions as mentioned in their respective by-laws. The contractors, however, have an association to raise their issues with the principal employer.

CONTRACTOR AND CONTRACT LABOUR

Here, we discuss the specific issues that have emerged in the interactions between the contractors and the human resource managers of the iron ore mine. These interactions were noted during formal meetings in the mine and through field notes that were collected in informal settings. These issues relate to the functioning of the contract labour system in the mines. Importantly, these issues have been flagged a few times in consecutive meetings, however, they remain structural and need a much deeper deliberation.

PROFIT MARGINS:

In the case of the iron ore mine of Jharkhand, when a tender is floated for any work or activity, the contractors usually quote a profit margin of 2%–4% while knowing fully well that the establishment can allow for a profit margin of up to 10%. This profit margin, which is over and beyond the work order, allows for the sustenance of the contractors themselves to stay in business. It is also seen that some contractors go to as low as negative profit margins in their quotation. Going by the diktats of open competition and a cost-cutting strategy, the establishment must choose contractors for work orders who quote the lowest amount. As mentioned earlier, these contractors have a deep understanding of the prevailing trend in the unit so as not to know what and how exactly to bag the work order. After the contract is given to any contractor, some “bad faith” contractors

maintain their usual profit margin (and sometimes beyond that as well) by squeezing pay from the contract labourers.

DEATH AND INJURY AT WORKPLACE:

The contract labourers are also governed by the Employees' Compensation Act (ECA), 1923, which puts the onus of responsibility of either death or injury directly or indirectly on the contractor. While Section 12(1) of the ECA maintains the liability of the principal employer in the event of any compensation to be provided in certain events, Section 12(2) entitles the principal employer to be indemnified by the contractor for such a liability. In cases where the contract does not explicitly mention the clause of compensation, the labour commissioner would decide on the matter. As it turns out, such legislation also put the contractors in a position whereby they will want a buffer stock of resources to cater to such needs if they arise.

It is to be noted that the law looks at contractors as “petty” employers who would be able to tide over such difficulties at workplace. Often, either the contractor has limited resources available at their disposal as compared to the principal employer, or it may directly be owing to the non-willingness of the contractors that puts the burden solely on the contract labourers themselves. This is not to mention that based on the type of accident/disablement or death, the resources provided to the contract labour or their family sometimes remain inadequate.

THE DAMAGES CLAUSE

In mid-2021, the trade unions across the company's production and mining activities called for a strike to push for their wage revision demand. As part of the worker solidarity and show of strength, the contract labourers were also coerced into joining the strike. The contract labourers also joined the strike without being permanent employees of the establishment or members of the trade union. Therefore, on account of work not being done for that day, contractors faced penalisation owing to the liquidated damages (LD) clause set up in the contract for not providing labour for that day. The contractors maintain that although the contract labourers were ready to work that day, they were not allowed to do so owing to the strike; hence, the LD clause should not be applied in such cases. This again presents a scenario wherein the contractors find such clauses not in their best interests. Rectification of such clauses for the future also goes beyond the scope of the management.

Additionally, such strikes that although take the form of a pan-worker solidarity across different locations and grades of the establishment, nevertheless have had little to contribute to the cause of the contract laborers themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from these excerpts that the onus of the employment of contract labourer falls to a large extent on the contractor. The contractors face the brunt of not having enough resources as the principal employer or not having the inclination to better the condition of contract labour. Hence, such rent-seeking behaviour from the contractor is witnessed. Therefore, while social-security provisions for contract labourers are desirable, the employment and employer–employee relationship also play a crucial role in providing contract labourers the necessary rights at the workplace. Given the avenue of employment picking up fast in the economy, it is time to address these loopholes.

Ritu

The Endemic and Pandemic

WHY IN NEWS? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The United Kingdom has relaxed limitations and California has taken new steps to treat Covid-19 as an endemic disease.

WHAT DOES IT IMPLY TO BE IN THE ENDEMIC STAGE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Endemic means that the virus will continue to circulate throughout the population, with periodic ups and downs when the virus's conditions are favourable and human conditions are not.

If the frequencies of an infection remain constant in a certain geographic place, it is said to be endemic. It depicts that the disease-causing pathogen is likely to continue in circulation without generating large-scale outbreaks.

The amount of suspected people in the population, vaccination rates, and the introduction of novel variations that can avoid the immune response antibodies developed against SARS-CoV-2 also play a role. So, We can presume that a disease is endemic if a representative sero-survey shows over 90% positive. But a neutralisation investigation is needed to evaluate if these antibodies can effectively guard against the present variations.

WHAT ARE THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE VARIOUS STAGES? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Pandemics, epidemics, and endemics are defined by the rate at which a disease spreads, according to the WHO.
- Difference between an epidemic and a pandemic is not in the intensity of the disease, but in its spread.
- The epidemic occurs when a disease spreads quickly and unpredictably in a specific place.
- The Pandemic is a disease spread internationally or over a large area, it is called a pandemic. Example – H1N1 (2009) and Spanish flu (1918)
- An endemic illness is one that is constantly present in a certain community at a lower and more steady level, even if cases increase under certain circumstances.
- Pandemics are not officially declared by the WHO. A global health emergency is the highest degree of alert, and Covid-19 has warranted that distinction since January 2020.

ENDEMIC MAKES US SAFER? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The Endemic does not suggest that a pathogen has been tamed by evolution and that life has returned to normal.

The endemic disease is one that is both widespread and fatal.

For example, Malaria killed over 600,000 people in 2020, while 10 million people had tuberculosis and 1.5 million died.

According to the US measles epidemic in 2019 demonstrated, endemic infection does not ensure stability; there can still be disruptive waves from endemic illnesses.

The Delta variant, high prevalence in emergence of Omicron, inequitable vaccine distribution to low-income nations, and lax control measures in certain wealthier countries provide fertile ground for SARS-CoV-2 to evolve.

HOW WILL CONTROL MEASURES CHANGE IF THE DISEASE BECOMES ENDEMIC?

- The easing of restrictions has been pushed but there is a need to maintain high levels of testing and good genomic surveillance.
- The new variants can be found by:
 - ▶ conducting a general survey
 - ▶ sequencing cases immediately wherever there are more cases
 - ▶ keeping a very close eye on hospitalised cases
- When a virus replicates more, the greater chances that problematic variants will arise, most probably where spread is highest.
- Herd immunity occurs when a large proportion of a community becomes immune to a disease through infection or vaccines, halting the disease from spreading.
- Threshold percentage has gradually been increasing from about 60-70% during the original strain to 85% with Delta and upwards of 90% with Omicron.
- The better way to prevent dangerous or more-transmissible variants from emerging is to stop unconstrained spread which requires integrated public-health interventions, including vaccine equity.

Vivek Raj

