



PLUTUS IAS

Weekly CURRENT AFFAIRS



PLUTUS IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS 1-05-2022 to 6-05-2022

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAY 2022

Role of labor Movement in International Politics (An analysis in special context to Indian Labor movement)

CONTEXT :

1st may is celebrated in the world as the International labor /Workers day .In India it is celebrated as Kamgar Divas, Kamgar Din and Antarrashtriya Shramik Divas. In some countries of the world, it is a very auspicious day. On this occasion the laborers and the workers of the world remember the glorious day of the first International where the demand of the fixing working hours for the laborers was raised and most of the countries had accepted the fixation of the working hours . this was the victory of the labor class on the capitalist class

Introduction :

1st May is the sacred day for all the workers and labor of the world. On this occasion, people across the world conduct protests and march for the rights of workers and save them from economical exploitation of the capitalist class. The Labor Movement not only influenced the politics of India but also politics of the world. However, the organized labor movement in the world had started during the 2nd quarter of the 19th century with the Industrial revolution in Europe while in India the organized labor movement came to existence after the 1st decade of the 20th century with the establishment of the Indian Industries

HISTORY OF LABOR MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

- As the Industrial revolution started in Europe , a new social class came to existence because the bourgeoisie class exercised their control over the economy of Industrial countries . Therefore the exploitation of the labor class / working class starts in such circumstances . therefore some socialist thinkers came to existence who started to criticize capitalism and rejected the trend of labor exploitation for maximum profit
- Socialists' and the labor movements were concomitant consequences of Industrial revolution . An effective response against various restrictions imposed by the capitalist on the working class was socialism ; whereas the fusion of mutual cooperation and organizing spirit in workers for improvement in their conditions was known as labor

movement

- Labor movements in Europe derive from the reaction of the newly urbanized workers to industrialization in the nineteenth century. In Britain, the nature of the labor movement was reformist rather than revolutionary in Germany and other European countries. The Chartist Movement was the precursor of the labor movement. Therefore during the last decade of the 19th century we see the emergence of labor in England.
- In 1900, in a meeting of certain trade unions in England several political parties like Fabian Society, independent labor Party and democratic federation and an organization under the name of labor Representation committee were constituted in that meeting. In the election of 1906, the committee secured 30 seats in the parliaments, Very soon the committee changes its name to labor party
- We see the revolutionary changes in the after the evolution of the labor organization everywhere in the world. During the last decade in the 19th century, the socialist movement started spreading its roots in Japan as well. On 14th July, 1889, a conference was convened in Paris with the view to threading socialist movement into an international organization and 400 representatives from 20 countries attended the conference. This was known as the second international. It was decided to celebrate 1st May every year as the unity day of labor. On 1st May, 1890 lacs of the workers went on strikes in entire Europe and in America and staged huge demonstrations.
- The most important achievement of the second international was the struggle against militarism and the war. And in 1917, just because of the socialism the Russian revolution occurred and a socialist government was formed. It is true to consider that capitalism is always the cause of international war. In any war the interests of the upper class, mainly rulers and capitals would be protected. The Second international condemned colonialism and encouraged the socialist party to oppose the loot and slavery of colonies. When the first world war broke out the second international collapsed

HISTORY OF LABOR MOVEMENT IN INDIA

- In Indian context, the swadeshi upsurge was a landmark in the history of the national movement. The number of strikes rose sharply. But these strikes of labor were against the European Mill owners. Up to this time Indian industries could not be established. The most significant feature of the labor movement during this time was the shifting of agitation against economic questions towards the involvement of Indian laborers in politics.
- In India, the most important development was the formation of All India trade Union Congress in 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai was the first president and Diwan Chaman Lal was its general secretary. Lala Lajpat Rai emphasized – “Indian labor should lose no time to organize itself on a national scale.. the greatest need of this country is to organize, agitate and educate.

- The manifesto issued to the workers by the AITUC urged them not to organize themselves only but also to intervene in national politics . Lala Lajpat Rai was among the first in India to link capitalism with imperialism and he stated – “militarism and imperialism are the twin children of capitalism, they are one in three and three in one . their shadow, their fruit, their bark, all are poisonous and the antidote of this poison had been discovered and that is organized labor ”
- During the second half of the 20th century the labor movement in India has now turned towards Marxism . Various communist group in different part of India had organized themselves into Workers and Peasant party (WPP) under the leadership of S.A. dange, Mujjaffar Ahemad , P.C Joshi, Sohen Singh Josh etc
- After the 1930s the labor movement suffered a major setback due to government offensives and due to a shift in Communist led wing of the movement . In this way we see the organized labor movement played an important role in national politics before independence of India .

CONCLUSION

After the independence of India , however, the working class, mainly workers of the unorganized sector are still being exploited. Workers employed in these sectors are not getting minimum wage because of the corruption and awareness. The workers of these sectors are deprived of several other social rights. Without socioeconomic freedom, political freedom is completely worthless . The first May is the symbol of economic freedom . On this date , all the workers and labor class of the world feel a common interest irrespective of the international boundaries

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

Cryptos and CBDC

The central bank must note that a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) can only be a fiat currency and not a crypto.

WHAT ARE CRYPTO ASSETS?

- A crypto asset is a digital asset; but not all digital assets are crypto assets.
- The distinguish features of crypto assets:
 - o uses cryptography
 - o depends on distributed ledger technology
 - o no need for a third party such as a bank to issue crypto assets
 - o have three primary uses: as an investment, a medium of exchange, and to access goods and services.

- Crypto assets are commonly known as cryptocurrencies such as Litecoin, Ripple, Bitcoin, and Ethereum.

WHAT IS CBDC?

- A CBDC is a legal tender issued by a bank in a digital format.
- Also known as digital base money or digital fiat currencies, a CBDC is no different from hard cash, apart from the fact that they are in a digital or virtual form.
- It is not meant to replace hard cash but coexist as an additional form of payment method

WHAT WERE THE DIFFERENT STANDS TAKEN ON CRYPTOS?

- Finance minister– In the Budget session, it was said that Cryptocurrency will be discouraged via taxation and capital gains provisions.
- RBI Governor– The Governor of the RBI highlighted that private cryptocurrencies are a big threat to our financial and macroeconomic stability.
- Also he said that these cryptocurrencies have no underlying asset.
- Deputy Governor of RBI– A Deputy Governor of the RBI called cryptos worse than a Ponzi scheme and argued against legitimizing them.
- Supreme Court– The Supreme Court of India has asked the Government whether or not cryptos are legal.

HOW DO CRYPTOS BECOME ACCEPTABLE AS TOKENS FOR EXCHANGE?

- A currency is a token used in market transactions.
- Historically, commodities (copper coins) have been used as tokens since they themselves are valuable.
- But paper currency is useless till the government declares it to be a fiat currency as it derives its value from state backing.
- Cryptos are a string of numbers in a computer programme and there is no state backing.
- Cryptos acquire value and can be transacted via the net which enables them to function as money.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO BAN CRYPTOS?

- The total valuation of cryptos recently was upward of 2 trillion dollars which is more than the value of gold held globally.

- Cryptos which operate via the net can be banned only if all nations come together.
- Even then, tax havens may allow cryptos to function, defying the global agreement

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CBDC AND CRYPTOCURRENCIES?

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS OF CBDC?

- Blockchain enables decentralisation where everyone on the crypto platform has a say but, central banks want a fiat currency to be exclusively issued and controlled by them.
- Theoretically everyone can 'mine' and create crypto unlike the centrally controlled CBDC.
- Solving the 'double spending' problem and being a crypto (not just a digital version of currency) seems impossible.
- A centralised CBDC will require the RBI to validate each transaction.
- CBDCs at present cannot be a substitute for cryptos that will soon begin to be used as money. This will impact the functioning of central banks and commercial banks.

Anshum Verma

Indian Federalism : An analysis regarding its future

CONTEXT:

India consciously adopted a version of federalism that made the Union government and State governments interdependent on each other (with latter more vis-a-vis the former) thereby violating the primal characteristic of a federal constitution i.e., autonomous spheres of authority for Union and State governments.

Introduction

India adopted federalism of a specific nature .After independence federalism is continuously strengthening. In fact, the objective of a welfare state can be achieved only through federalism. The structure of the Indian constitution seems sometimes quasi federalism, sometimes cooperative federalism and sometimes hybrid federalism where some features of federalism and some features of unitary can be seen .

In fact our freedom fighters, mainly revolutionaries, wanted to establish federal governance in India. The HRA (Hindustan republican Association /Army) and HSRA (Hindustan socialist republican Association /Army) wanted to establish a federal Republic of the United States of India whose basic principle would be adult Franchise. However, J.L, Nehru was initially in the fever of extreme federalism before the partition. But as the partition was executed he supported unitary and gradually tending towards federalism. The contemporary discourse on

federalism in India is moving on a discursive note across multiple dimensions, be it economic, political and cultural, to the extent that one is compelled to regard India to be at an inflection point vis-a-vis Center-State relations owing to increasing asymmetry. Without an active and committed citizenry a democracy can devour itself and, in this context, it is worth engaging with India's federal ethos and the associated asymmetries

WHY INDIA ADOPTED CENTRALIZED FEDERAL STRUCTURE

In fact, In the Indian constitution, our constitution makers did not use the term federalism. Instead of it, they used the term Union which is indestructible. There are two types of government in India, the Union government and the state government. Both are mutually dependent over each other which is contradictory to the primary concept of federalism. In Indian constitution, big states has more representation in Lok Sabha and in Rajya Sabha . In fact in every manner of the constitution , big states are more powerful in comparison to small state .Article 3 of the Indian Constitution which allows the Union to alter the boundaries of a State without the latter's consent, emergency powers, and concurrent list subjects of the Seventh Schedule wherein the Union possesses more authority than the State barring a few exceptions .

There are several reason because of which India had to adopt centralized federal structure

- At the time of partition of India , a threat of disintegration of India emerged because of the formation of Pakistan . Our leaders never wanted to accept any further disintegration of India . Therefore they advocated for the strong center. However they knew this fact very well that in such huge diversity extreme centralization could be survived for long time therefore they promised for proving federalism to India in future (Gradually states would provide more autonomy in future and) and in the Directive Principles of State Policy , the federalism was promised to provide (Article 40 – More autonomy up to the lowest unit of the administration/ establishment of Panchayati raj System). And hence our supreme court considered federalism as a fundamental structure of the constitution and in the case of S.R. Bommai vs Union of India case(1994) it was declared . However initially our leaders like J.B. Kripalani too spoke in favor of maximum autonomy to the States and regarded centralization to be at odds with liberty.
- We had not developed as a nation (Common feelings/ unanimous interest). Therefore , through extreme centralization we wanted to develop ourselves as a nation . therefore , initially through strong centralization , first , we wanted to unite us politically , then through common programme, we wanted to create common feelings and then we decided to provide autonomy gradually
- In such a diverse culture any central government policy could not be implemented. therefore we advocated extreme centralization
- The final reason involved the alleviation of inter-regional economic inequality. We could

not resolve such problems without extreme centralized rule

FUTURISTIC NATURE OF THE FEDERALISM

In diversified and pluralist countries , extreme centralism cannot survive for a long time. The public welfare state can be established only through federalism or decentralization . However at the time of independence of India , extreme centralization was our compulsion but now the nationalism of India has been strengthened and the binding elements of the center and state have become more strong , so therefore we should provide autonomy at the lowest unit of the administration gradually. Now , in future , the federalism would be stronger . linguistic reorganization would not have been possible if India followed a rigid or conventional federal system.

CONCLUSION

As per the above discussion , presently, the Indian constitution is not the federal constitution in its true means. It is quasi federal but it is tending towards federalism . In future the federal elements of the constitution would be stronger and it is true and should be accepted that federalism is only a tool to provide the public welfare state in a pluralistic country like India . federalism is the strength of India . Indian federalism is non destructible union of the state . the concept of the federalism is not new for India . we have been practiced federalism for thousands of the years . hence , for Indian context , the federalism would be intact .

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

INDIA'S POWER CRISIS

Despite high coal production, thermal power plants in India are suffering from shortages.

IS INDIA HEADING TOWARDS A POWER CRISIS?

Coal-based power generation accounts for about 53% of India's total power capacity as on March 2022.

- Several States across the country are expected to face coal shortages that might lead to power shortages in the coming weeks.
- India had faced a similar energy crisis in October 2021, but the crisis this time around may be worse with peak power demand expected to rise higher due to increasing temperatures.
- Reasons for this crisis
 - o Depleting coal supplies at thermal power plants
 - o High global thermal coal prices (the prices of coal are over 350% higher year on year)

- o Below normal imports
- o Interruption in coal supply mainly due to heavy rains
- o High demand for coal (Demand for coal has increased by 9% over the previous year)
- o Temperature rise

HOW CRITICAL IS THE COAL SHORTAGE?

- The situation at thermal power plants is deteriorating consistently and has reached critical levels.
- As per the National Power Portal, both imported coal-based (ICB) power plants and domestic coal-based power plants were facing critical stocks.
- As per the Central Electricity Authority report, of the total 173 thermal power plants in the country, 100 thermal power plants' coal stock situations are critical.
- The total stocks available were 23.17 million tonnes (MT) against a daily requirement of 2.76 MT.
- The stocks at this level will last for less than nine days.
- States like Gujarat and Maharashtra already declare load shedding (the deliberate shutdown of electric power in a part or parts of a power-distribution system, generally to prevent the failure of the entire system when the demand strains the capacity).

WHAT STEPS HAS THE GOVERNMENT TAKEN TO TACKLE THIS PROBLEM?

- Revised coal stocking norms- The government has issued revised coal stocking norms, which mandate the power plants to maintain sufficient stocks at all times
- Constitution of Groups- An Inter-Ministerial Sub Group with senior officials from Ministries of Power, Coal, Railways, CEA, CIL and SCCL meet regularly to take various operational decisions to enhance supply of coal to thermal power plants.
- Imports- Power Ministry has advised power plants to import about 36 MT coal for blending during 2022-23 with a view to build sufficient coal stock at power plants.
- Monitoring- The Ministry has a Core Management Team (CMT) to ensure close monitoring of coal stocks at thermal power plants.
- Role of Coal India- Coal India, the state-owned miner claims that it has ramped up supplies to thermal power plants by nearly 12% annually.

WHY IS THIS CRISIS RECURRING EVERY YEAR?

- **Lack of coordination-** The lack of coordination between various ministries involved in the process such as the Power Ministry, Coal Ministry and Railways is the foremost

reason.

- **Blaming game-** The Coal Ministry blames the Indian Railways for non-availability of adequate rakes.
- **Similarly, the Railways has pointed out the mismanagement in loading and unloading of rakes by Coal India.**
- **Poor planning-** Despite high coal production and dispatch of miners, the supply at power plants has still not gone above 15 days in the last six months which implies poor planning.

Anshum Verma

Cooling off time Period Must be required before Joining any political party after the retirement of big government officials (Judiciary and Executive)

CONTEXT :

Recently During the hearing on writ petition seeking a direction to the legislature to frame a law imposing a cooling-off period for retired bureaucrats with political ambitions, A Bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and A.S. Bopanna (Supreme Court of India) stated that this is the work of Legislators to decide whether a cooling-off period is required for government officials before they join politics and contest elections after retirement..

Introduction

- For the contesting in election and joining in politics, presently there are no restrictions on civil servants. generally being as a civil servant , they attracts with the ideology of several political parties and after retirement, immediately they Join the political party
- For the last few years it has been observed that many government servants, just after retirement, join any of the political parties and contest in elections and win and enter in the parliament , either through Rajya Sabha or through Lok Sabha. Even in this process the retired Judges, However Judges of High courts and the supreme courts are not untouched. However, constitutionally, every citizen of India is free to opt any of the professions and presently there is no cooling off time period after the retirement of the government servants before joining any political party. It has been also observed that most of the retired civil servants join that political party which is either in the power or about to come in Power.
- Recently, during the UP legislative election, many working civil servants (As senior police

officers like ACP/DCP and CP) voluntarily retired and joined the ruling party BJP and contested in the election and won. This is not a simple thing. These practices are the more corrupt practices of democracy and must be stopped.

WHY THE COOLING OFF TIME IS REQUIRED

- Generally, those civil servants/government servants which are very much ambitious, during their service they can work beyond the ethical values of civil services. They can be influenced with fear or favor of political parties, mainly ruling political parties. Therefore, to maintain the highest ethical standards of integrity and honesty, political neutrality, fairness and impartiality in the discharge of duties, Civil servants should be stopped from joining any political party immediately after their retirement. Some government services which are not much important in the administration (executive or Judiciary both) and the officials of lower ranking can be exempted from this provision.
- Democracy is the fundamental requirement for the survival of the country and for strengthening of the democratic values, the transparency of the administration (Executive and Judiciary) must be ensured. But If the highest officials of the government services join the ruling political party after retirement, then how integrity, transparency, honesty would be enacted .
- This is not the responsibility of the judiciary only to protect and conserve our democratic values, this is the responsibility of all the citizens of India to protect and conserve our democratic values our freedom , which we have achieved after huge sacrifices . Therefore , the legislature which is formed by us must take initiative in this regard. This is the region , court dismissed this petition. The dismissing of the petition does not mean that this issue is worthless. But the dismissal of this petition emphasizes that all the citizens of India must understand their responsibility. If any political party does such practices should be rejected in the election or we, the people should pressurize our legislature to form such laws which restrict the joining of any political party immediately after the retirement of the big government officials

CONCLUSION

The issue of the cooling off time period after the retirement of any big government official before joining any political party, mainly the ruling party, is not a small issue. It is related to the malpractices of the administration . generally political parties misuse these flaws of the Indian constitution . Therefore, our intellectuals and responsible media channels must bring this issue to public debate so that the government/ our legislature could make some rules and regulations on this also .

Dr Anshul Bajpai

FREEDOM OF PRESS : A TOOL TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

Context :

India falls 8 positions to 150th rank in RSF 2022 World Press Freedom Index. World Press Freedom Day is celebrated on 3rd may every. On this occasion, we should analyze the degrading ranking of freedom of media.

Introduction

- Media is known as the fourth pillar of democracy. Other three pillars are executive, legislative and the Judiciary. If these three pillars destroy democracy, only free media protects the democracy by providing the information to the public.
- The concept of the press was involved not only to collect the information but also to criticize the government. Media originated as a tool to criticize the government. In the Indian context we had to fight for hundreds of years to secure its freedom. Therefore, the freedom of the press must be ensured in any democratic country.
- If we have a poor ranking at international level, we should think how to remove the obstacles which are brought in front of the freedom of press. We have to find out the tools through which maximum freedom of the press could be ensured. The poor ranking of India in the World press freedom index paints a negative portrait among democratic countries. And If we have lower ranking in World Free press Index in comparison to our neighboring countries. It must be thinkable



THE PARAMETER ON WHICH THIS WPFI IS BASED ON

There are 5 parameters on which this ranking is based on

- Legal framework
- Political context
- Economical Context
- Safety of journalist
- Socio cultural content

Among these parameters, India is ranked worst on this parameter of the safety of journalists. Safety regarding their job, regarding their personal security. India's ranking on this parameter is 163. Therefore these journalists have to work as a puppet of their editors and the management of the media groups and if the media groups are the pro government, these journalists have no dare to write anything against the will of their management.

Besides job security, journalists have to face Psychological or emotional distress that could result from intimidation, coercion, harassment, surveillance, doxing (publication of personal information with malicious intent), degrading or hateful speech, smears and other threats targeting journalists.

In such a situation How e can think about the authentic and impartial news and information which we are getting.

The parameter legal framework defines the degree to which journalists and media are free to work without censorship or Judicial sanction. Since our country is a democratic country therefore the constitution provides more rights to journalists legally. On this parameter,

however, India's ranking is satisfactory. It is the 120 in the world. However Government always tries to censor the contents which are against the government on the ground of sedition and many sections of the IPC of the British time are still functioning to frame charge against journalist

The parameter Political context defines the degree of support and respect of the media autonomy vis-s-vis political pressure from the state or from other political actors. On this parameter India has 145 ranking in the world. Only few media channels like NDTV and press The Hindu have authentic regarding to provide news to public and some channels and the press world without any political pressure and they have dare to criticize the government's policies

The Parameter economical context defines the economic constraints linked to governmental policies (including the difficulty of creating a news media outlet, favoritism in the allocation of the state subsidies) . Besides it depends on the economic constrains linked to non-state actors (advertisers and the commercial partners) as well as it also linked to the business interest of the media owners. On this parameter, India's ranking is also bad. This is 149

The parameter Socio Cultural context defines social constraints resulting from the denigration and attacks on the press based on such issues as gender, class, ethnicity and religion . However the ranking of India on this parameter is 127 but it is still satisfactory.

WHY INDIAN MEDIA IS BIASED

Most of the media houses in India are run by the big big businessmen of the India and it is obvious that business man works only for the profit . No businessman would work in loss making ventures for a long time. Therefore, these media houses have to write in the favor of those Industrialists and institutions from where they get the financial support and the advertisement. These media houses shows those news which would be demanded by the public. Therefore for the TRP, every media channel is competition. In the cat run of the media channels for the TRP, the real news and the real issues have been lost. If the demand of the viewers would be changes the nature of the media houses may change.

HOW TO INCREASE THIS RANKING AND WHAT GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE SHOULD DO TO STRENGTHEN THE IMPARTIALITY OF OUR MEDIA

- To strengthen democracy, our media should be unbiased and impartial . But the question remain, how the media houses would be unbiased. We should remove all those obstacles which are there in front of the freedom of the press. Among of those, the economical context is the most important parameter. Government should ensure that media houses would be subsidized in case of economic loss and without any partiality the government would give financial support to all media houses.
- Another important parameter is the security of media houses. The job of the journalist

must be secured. They should not be fired at any cost during their services period. They should be provided personal security in case of any threat. Once the security of the journalist would be ensured, up to maximum extent the media houses can be made more impartial and unbiased.

CONCLUSION

As per the above discussion, it has been observed that the credibility of the Indian press is continuously declining at international level. In world Free Press Ranking, India rank is 150, which is continuously trending downward. It is the issue of concern and the government should find out the measures how to increase this ranking in future so that credibility of Indian media and democratic values could be increased. In the above discussion some measures have been suggested but this is the duty of the people and the politicians to bring this issue to the stage of debate. So that new measure could be discovered in the well being of the Indian media

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

Fortified food and health

The government has recently announced a fast schedule of spreading rice fortification in India. According to this schedule, the supply of fortified rice to the Integrated Child Development Services, midday meals, other nutrition and welfare schemes as well as to the vast public distribution system is to be completed by 2024.

This rapid rollover of rice fortification is likely to be harmful in various ways. Rice fortification should not be seen in isolation, but together with programmes and proposals for fortification of several other essential foods like salt, milk, edible oils, and wheat, apart from the fact that fortification is also used in several other widely sold packaged food products.

HEALTH CONCERNS OF FORTIFIED FOOD

The first risk is that there can be health problems arising from excess intake of some of the micronutrients in fortified foods like iron and vitamins. The fact that such excess can lead to several health problems is well established as is the fact that this is much more likely to arise from artificial fortification than from natural foods. The process of fortification involving the processing in heavy machines can also lead to some undesirable residual products finding their way to our food.

In the case of fortified rice, if the fortified kernels do not blend optimally with normal rice, the consumer can be confused regarding whether there are some undesirable contaminants to be removed. The next step can be to promote only a few rice varieties, or to give a better price for only such varieties, or even to root for patented or genetically modified varieties in

the name of varieties that blend well.

While the need is to encourage smaller, village-level processing of rice and all other food, thus generating local livelihoods, this rice fortification will take us in the opposite direction of further increasing the centralisation of rice production by a few big businesses. The idea of local village-level rice processing will be dashed forever. It will become difficult to establish even a cottage industry based on rice produced in the nearby fields of villages as the rice grown here cannot be used directly without fortification.

Now, rice processing will be in the hands of those big companies, including multinational companies, which control the fortification technology. Other rice millers will survive only after taking loans and adding the new expensive machinery and then too only as junior partners of those who control fortification technology, who can keep dictating to them to make improvements in processing and machinery, thus imposing added costs on them.

FOOD SECURITY

It has been seen time and again that staple food becomes more expensive once its processing passes into the hands of big business interests. To give an example, even at the time of the influx of cheap corn in Mexico as a result of a free trade agreement with the United States, the price of tortillas remained high because the maize milling and flour industry was concentrated in a few big business units. Thus, farmers (due to higher maize imports) and consumers (due to higher prices) both suffered. In fact, at the time of the farmers' movement in 2021, the main point precisely was that both the ordinary farmers and consumers will be harmed with the increasing domination of big businesses. But it appears that the government has still not learned this lesson.

In the case of indigenous rice varieties, it is often stated that the flavor improves with time. So, it has been usual to store and eat something later. The shelf life of the fortified rice kernels is stated to be only around 12 months or so. We need to remember that storage periods in the Food Corporation of India warehouses can be quite long and then transportation across vast distances, ultimately to the fair price shops (FPSs), takes its own time too..

PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

An important need in India is highly decentralized procurement so that a significant part of the food procured in a village ends up in the same village's FPSs and nutrition programmes, reducing food transportation that is good both for the environment and food security. Mandatory food fortification can shut the door on such ideas.

CONCLUSION

Now let us see if we can achieve better nutrition enhancement objectives in other ways. Even official reviews say that the need for fortification arises because the present-day milling removes essential nutrients from rice significantly. Hence, the most obvious way is to move

away from milling that indulges in excessive removal and polishing to milling, which results in a much lower removal and polishing, thus reducing this as much as possible. Such technology is certainly available, and so the real solution is actually very simple and inexpensive. However, the biggest gains for nutrition will come from following the social agroecology approach in farming and food, which is based on improving soil health and the overall natural conditions of farming on the one hand and reducing inequalities on the other. As soil is nursed back to its health, its balance of micronutrients will return, and the nutrition of plants grown in this soil will improve too. Reducing inequalities at all levels and promoting creative, sustainable, and ecologically protective livelihoods of people remain the best means of chasing away hunger and malnutrition, but well-implemented nutrition programmes in both villages and cities will also help

Ritu

Naga Problem : A threat for Integrity of India

Context :

Recently an annual report was released by the Ministry of Home Affairs government of India . According to which Nagas are still involved in violent activities, it was stated in that report that the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) was involved in 44% of insurgency-related incidents in Nagaland in 2020.

INTRODUCTION

The Naga problem has emerged in India as India got freedom . An ethnic group residing near Naga hill demanded sovereignty from the Indian rule and they started a pseudo war against the Indian government . Nagas are various ethnic groups native to northeastern India and northwestern Myanmar.

THE BEGINNING OF THE NAGA ISSUE

- In fact the issue of Naga's sovereignty starts before the freedom of India . When the British annexed Assam in 1820 , the Naga hill was also brought under British control. But the British provided Naga autonomy up to a certain extent. The British provided them autonomy in their internal affairs. Nagas could protect their traditional life, cultures and costumes etc. British controlled them through the laws implemented on the top level.
- After the second world war , when it was realized that the British would provide freedom to India , Nagas also started their organizations and demanded separate freedom. In Fact they declared their freedom . The reason for the discontent among the Nagas was because of the infiltration of the plain people from Assam . Naga people formed Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945, which was renamed the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946.

Under the uncertain situation of the future of Nagas after the liberation of India , a section of the NNC, led by Naga leader A.Z. Phizo declared the independence of the Nagas on August 14, 1947, a day before India's declaration.. After that a huge insurgency emerged in those regions. However at that time newly independent India was facing so many other problems so India could not control it at that time .

- In the early 1950s when Mr. Phizo founded the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and its armed wing, the Naga Federal Army (NFA), He refused to accept the Indian constitution and during this time insurgency activities have increased rapidly . The Indian government had to send armed forces to control such insurgency and the central government had to impose the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which is still in place in parts of Nagaland. The Nagas, led by Mr. Phizo, demanded an independent state outside of India. Which could not be accepted at any cost . Indians could be given autonomy under the Indian constitution. These people boycotted the general election of 1952 and 1957 also .
- This type of problem of autonomy not only emerged in Naga hill region but many other tribal groups of the Assam region demanded autonomy . But these groups agreed to accept autonomy under the Indian constitution . Some Naga groups , however, were interested in negotiation with the Indian government , therefore conflicts among those groups could also be seen . Finally , to satisfy Naga people, an Independent state Nagaland was formed in 1963, however, it did not satisfy many in the NNC (Naga National Council)and NFG (Naga Federal Government). during the time Indira Gandhi , in 1975 Shillong Accord was came into force with signing by NNC and NFG. and they agreed to surrender their arms and to accept the Constitution.

WHAT IS THE RECENT ISSUE

- Some top leaders of the NNC who were operating NNC from Myanmar did not accept the Shillong accord , therefore Three NNC leaders — Thuingaleng Muivah of the Tangkhul Naga tribe of Manipur's Ukhrul district, Isak Chishi Swu of the Sema tribe, and S. S. Khaplang from Myanmar's Hemis tribe, formed the National Socialist Council Of Nagaland (NSCN) to continue the armed movement. In fact , NSCN is demanding complete freedom from the constitution of India and it continued its armed revolt/ movement .
- During 1988 , because of some internal issue (regarding killing of one innocent Naga people) the NSCN split into two factions. One, led by Mr. Muiwah and Swu called the NSCN split into two factions. One, led by Mr. Muiwah and Swu called the NSCN-IM and the other, led by Mr. Khaplang is called the NSCN-K.
- NSCN-IM group continues its demand to free Nagaland from the Indian constitution and nowadays it is the most powerful and big insurgent group of the North east. Now it has extended its demand for Greater Nagaland including some regions of Assam , and Arunachal Pradesh where Naga tribes reside. Its armed operations intensified along with illegal activities like tax extortion, smuggling of weapons and so on. The demand of the

Nagalingam (Greater Nagaland) can never be accepted by Indian government.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF THE PEACE TALK NOW

- In 1997, the Government of India got the NSCN-IM to sign a ceasefire agreement to begin the holding of talks with the aim of signing a Naga Peace Accord. After this more than 100 rounds of peace talk have been done but the solution is still awaited. New Delhi has been holding peace parleys simultaneously with the NSCN-IM, and the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) comprising at least seven other extremist groups, including the NSCN (K).
- A Framework Agreement with the NSCN (IM) signed in 2014 was the real step of the peace accord. Joint Intelligence Chief R.N. Ravi was appointed the interlocutor for Naga peace talks and signed the agreement on behalf of the Center. In 2019, he was appointed as the governor of Nagaland . Nagas are continuously demanding the separate constitution and the separate flag which was not accepted by the Indian government . Hence after the demand of the removal of Ravi and the interlocutor, the Center government appointed an Intelligence Bureau officer A.K. Mishra who continued this peace talk. Indians at any cost would not accept the demand of the separate constitution and the flag

CONCLUSION

There are many internal and external problems which our country is passing on. The Naga issue is a big issue related to the sovereignty and integrity of India . The Naga problem of Naga is a big problem in comparison to the Kashmir problem . However we prefer peace up to the maximum extent but we prefer integrity of the country more also

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

Pandemic and delayed MGNREGA payments

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the global economy in 2020–21 and India is no exception. In the past one and a half years, an uncontrollable rise in the COVID-19 cases has compelled the Government of India (GoI) to resort to a series of curbs and lockdowns as a convenient measure to contain the spread of the virus. The perceptible slowing down of economic activities has pushed the nation into a deep economic crisis, with the year 2020–21 seeing the Indian gross domestic product (GDP) contract by 7.3% (GoI 2021).

The unorganized sector of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which absorbs a significant proportion of rural–urban migrants, saw a 46% dip in its business volume in the pandemic years due to which it was compelled to severely cut down on its workforce. Even in 2021, it continues to be in an appalling situation in the midst of a global supply chain crisis. Businesses that had resumed operations after the first wave in 2020 had to shut shop again due to the restrictions forced on the country because of the consequences of the second wave

in 2021. There was nothing the

MSMEs could resort to ensuring a continual supply chain as they did not have the financial capability to do that.

Currently, the working MSMEs are performing with one-third capacity, and as per the observation of the experts, the Indian MSME segment will take good time to achieve full recovery to the pre-COVID-19 levels of March 2020. Other urban informal jobs that cater to the employment needs of the semi/unskilled migrants include manufacturing/construction and vendoring. Continual restrictions at a variable extent followed by different states to arrest the spread of the infection have led to the situation of the migrants en masse returning to their native villages during the first wave and a sudden closure of economic activity. A large section of them are yet to resume their city-based works. Due to the large-scale “reverse migration,” their “fallback” employment option emerges to be the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

With the rate of unemployment touching the 10% mark by the mid-2000s and the glaring rise in rural unemployment, pressure was mounted on the government to implement new measures to bring unemployment and poverty under check. This led the GoI to launch the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) in 2006, the largest ever public works programme (PWP) in the world. It mandates “work as a right” and, at the same time, meets the parameter of gender equity through a concrete legal framework. The programme, renamed as “MGNREGS” in 2008, has been legally fortified to conform to the role of providing income insurance to the rural laborers against building of long-term capital assets as the scheme promises guaranteed employment for 100 days in a financial year per eligible household The Hindu Analysis.

Since its inception, it has generated 18–20 crore person-days all over India on an average every year. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) account for 25% of the total person-days. However, despite this success, since years the scheme is facing criticism from several corners. One of the major criticisms is the problem of delayed MGNREGA payment, which is alleged to be limiting its success. Prior to 2010, NREGs wages were paid in cash based on the entries made in the “muster roll” (or attendance sheet) by the implementing agency, namely the gram panchayat. The muster roll, prepared every week, is a record of the number of days worked and wages due to each laborer. After the muster roll was submitted to the block office, funds were transferred to the gram panchayat account. The money was then withdrawn by the implementing agency to make cash payments to the laborers. Under this system of cash payments, the implementing and payment agencies were the same. This made misappropriation of funds easier owing to the presence of corrupt officers at the panchayat level. Against this backdrop, introducing bank payments (or, in some areas, post office payments) was a cloud with a silver lining. But then, the situation improved a little because of the half-hearted implementation of the electronic Fund Management System (eFMS).

DELAYED PAYMENTS IN INDIA THE HINDU ANALYSIS

As per several reports at an all-India level since October 2021, the problem of delayed payment has aggravated. In October 2021, 33% of the MGNREGA workers' households failed to receive payment for their work. The percentage of pendency was more than 40% in November 2021.

The center's flagship rural employment scheme ran out of funds by October 2021 and showed a negative net balance of `8,686 crore (Jebaraj 2021). By then, already 21 states had exhausted their allocated funds. Supplementary budget allocations were required to come to the rescue but it could take place only after the next parliamentary session. So by then, the states tried to utilize their funds in whatever capacity possible to tide over the crisis. As a result, November sees a further rise in the burden of pendency. Today Current Affairs

Of the major 19 states, the ones suffering from the severe delay in payments are Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu (TN). In Arunachal Pradesh, more than 35% of beneficiaries have not received their due wages for more than two months. It is followed by West Bengal where 26% of participants are waiting to receive the remuneration of their PWP work. For TN, the percentage is 15%. Though in percentage share it may seem small but in absolute numbers it is a sizeable quantity given that there is more than 30% increase in the number of households participating in MGNREGS post the pandemic

MICRO-LEVEL STUDY: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

West Bengal stands at the second position in terms of wage pendency under the MGNREGA. Wage delay is likely to have a lot of grave ramifications on the livelihood of job cardholders' households, particularly in view of the pandemic when alternative economic activities have conspicuously declined. To assess them, West Bengal is chosen as the study area. The time frame of the study is between September 2021 and November 2021. Familiarity with culture and language was another major reason to choose the aforementioned state for carrying out this study. The process of selecting the panchayat where the actual survey was conducted is discussed below.

Since in 2021, the average person-days worked per household at an aggregate level was found to be 40 person-days, such a study area was selected wherein the MGNREGS performance would be consistent with the national average. It was difficult to get a rough picture of the national experience pertaining to the problem of delayed payment and its impact on the beneficiaries in these trying times of economic crisis. To shortlist the study area, initial attention was given to picking the district that met the above-mentioned criteria. Among the 23 districts of West Bengal, Bankura emerged to be the one where the participants had received around 40 person-days per household as was observed till September 2021, a figure in compliance with the national average.

ANALYZING SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Bankura is one of the most backward districts of West Bengal. The economy of Bankura district is characterized by an overwhelming agro-economic base and low urbanization. Agriculture is the primary occupation with the average land size available per cultivator being around 0.41 hectare (ha). Sixty-six percent of the rural population is engaged in various forms of agricultural labour occupation, whereas 32% of the rural workforce derives its livelihood from self-employment in farming (Census 2011).

Coming to the socio-economic background of the participant and non-participant households, Bankura is a Hindu-dominated district and the same is reflected in the study area (Table 7). The beneficiaries were a combination of households coming from SCs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who took part in MGNREGS activities. The sample shows that SC families' participation (83%) largely superseding that of OBCs' (17%).

MGNREGS AND INDEBTEDNESS: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

One of the most abhorrent ramifications of MGNREGA wage payment delay was rising indebtedness in the job cardholders' households. Practically, among large sections of the labour households, indebtedness was the most common feature as they resorted to multiple borrowings to combat shortage in consumption expenditure and economic emergencies during the pandemic. Now, delay in the payment under MGNREGA added to the agony.

Table 8 shows that around `10,000 to `11,000 was the average borrowing of the surveyed households (including both MGNREGS participant and non-participant households), which they had resorted to owing to economic and medical reasons at different points of 2021. However, due to delay in payment of MGNREGA wages, the participants had to go for an additional 27% borrowing. The preferable source of borrowing was private moneylenders because they were easily accessible. Besides that, private moneylenders often do not ask for any collateral as mortgage unlike banks. As a result, even after demanding a high percent interest rate per annum, the respondents opted for them. For the MGNREGS works carried out in September, wages were credited in the beneficiaries' account in mid-November. The outstanding loan as in November 2021 before the arrival of MGNREGA payment stood at 6% more than the basic. This is the interest amount payable on the principle charged by the private lenders. Though the beneficiaries did engage in different forms of casual works during October and November both in farm and non-farm sector, the money went for smoothening household consumption and no surplus could be generated that can be leveraged on to settle even a minimal portion of the rising debt. With credit of the MGNREGA wages in a lump sum volume, around 50% of the cumulative remuneration was said to be utilized by the participants to service off 14% of the outstanding loan in lieu to alleviate the debt pressure. But even then, 14% comes to be the extra financial burden caused as a consequence of MGNREGA deferred payment per household when the net payable credit of participant households was calculated. When compared with the net outstanding loan of MGNREGA non-participants (as in

in November 2021), the onus of the participants is calculated to be a significant 23% more indicating a graver situation of the MGNREGA beneficiaries relative to their counterpart colleagues.

CONCLUSIONS

In the troubling times of the pandemic which has triggered an economic shock, the most prominent negative repercussion was the threat to the livelihoods of the people working in the private sector. However, the first victims of job lay-offs were the people working in the unorganized urban economy, which saw a 46% dip in their business volume in 2020 (Jacob 2021). These employees usually hailed from rural roots who migrated in search of better income opportunities. On the close-down of several MSMEs in 2020, they were compelled to return to their villages. In 2021 as well, the MSMEs continued to suffer due to the global supply chain crisis as a result of which large sections of the migrants had failed to resume their urban-based informal works (Dewan et al 2021). In the rural hinterland, the MGNREGS was expected to come to the rescue and provide employment relief but the actual picture seems very different. Not only did the union labour budget sanctioned for MGNREGS was curtailed by 23% in 2021, many states were observed to be suffering from conspicuous delay in the MGNREGA payment since September–October 2021, because they had exhausted their share of the allocated budget under the MGNREGA and supplementary budget could be decided upon only in the next Parliament session.

Taking note of this serious predicament, a primary survey was conducted in West Bengal, which stands second in terms of the severity of delay in MGNREGS payment. Fieldwork was done in Babarda panchayat of Bankura district where the MGNREGS performance was in compliance of the national average. The selection was purposive in order to get a rough picture of the national experience pertaining to the problem of delayed payment and its implications on the beneficiaries in this period of economic crisis. The microanalysis shows that the participants were actually at a loss working in the said income assurance programme. They sacrificed agricultural work that was taking place during September in order to work in MGNREGA. However, the MGNREGS failed to reach on time and a conspicuous deferment forced them to go for additional borrowing, which augmented their burden of debt. The incapability of the union government to estimate a proper budget despite high demand for work under such social protection programmes given limited availability of other forms of employment owing to ongoing fear pandemic can be held responsible for such fallout.

In view of the rising rural poverty, the union government should emphasize on reverting back to the “bottom-up approach” in estimating the budget. This involves instructing the individual states to prepare a financial estimate on the basis of the prevailing demand pattern for the PWP at the ground level. This would help the center to keep that sum aside and promptly release the same on the submission of master rolls. Given the current plight, this is the appropriate step if the programme has to really meet its goal of alleviating destitution in this testing time.

Rubber (Promotion and Development)

The repeal of the Rubber Act, 1947 (hereafter the act) and the enactment of Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022 (hereafter the bill) have been under heated discussion ever since the bill was uploaded on the website of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) for comments and it is expected to be introduced in Parliament forthwith.

LEGISLATIONS IN RUBBER SECTOR

The Rubber (Production and Marketing) Act, 1947: After the end of World War II, deliberations on setting up a statutory body for regulatory and development activities in the rubber sector were expedited and the central government passed the Rubber (Production and Marketing) Act, thus establishing the Indian Rubber Board, which came into force from 19 April 1947.

CONTEXT OF THE NEW BILL: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Implications

The implications of the bill are examined with regard to the scope of the act: autonomy, constitution, functions, and powers of the board and powers of the central government.

Scope of the act: As per the original version of the act, the purpose of the legislation was “to provide for the development, under the central control of the rubber industry, so far as regards the production and marketing of rubber and for regulating export and import of rubber.” The amendment in 1954 revised the purpose of the act as “to provide for the development under the control of the union of the rubber industry.” However, as “rubber industry” was not defined in the act and as “rubber” was defined as natural rubber obtained from rubber trees, the revision had just taken away the limiting condition of “so far as regards the production and marketing of rubber and for regulating export and import of rubber.” In the bill, the purpose is stated as “to promote and develop the Indian rubber industry, enable the functioning of a modern rubber board and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto” and “rubber industry” is defined. As per the bill, “rubber industry” means “the industry engaged in the production, manufacture, supply, distribution, trade and commerce, utilization of rubber and rubber products, and includes rubber plants, the production, processing, and of Hevea wood, research, development of rubber estates, and services related thereto.”

Rubber board's autonomy: The term “board” here means the rubber board constituted by the central government (as per Section 4 of the act and Section 13 of the bill) comprising the

chairman, executive director, members of Parliament, and representatives of state governments and stakeholders and not the establishment of the board headed by executive director with departments/divisions undertaking extension, research, training, and other activities. The board is primarily a statutory advisory body and executive powers are vested with the principal executive officer who reports to the central government.

CONSTITUTION OF THE BOARD

Nine members were nominated or appointed by the central government in 1947 to the board. The stakeholder associations could nominate 11 members, whereas six members were nominated by the state governments of Travancore–Cochin and Madras. By amendment in the act in 1954, the provision of nominations by stakeholder associations was discontinued, the number of representatives allotted to the states of Travancore–Cochin and Madras were raised to 10, and the central government could nominate/appoint 12 persons. The central government officials, as representatives in the board, were excluded and the representatives of the states of Madras and Travancore–Cochin were made, not necessarily nominated by the respective governments.

Another development was the inclusion of three members of Parliament in the board. The change in the 1980 was the addition of an executive director to the board, and in the 2010, three officials of the central government were included. Meanwhile, the Rubber Rules, 1955 have been amended on several occasions, which included the number of members to be nominated by the central and state governments, the number of small and large growers, etc. The major change in the bill is that except for the three members nominated by Parliament, all the members of the board will be either nominees or appointees of the central government.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S POWERS

The allegation that the central government would acquire the powers of the board through the bill is not right as almost all the powers are vested with the central government even in the existing act. There are also accusations that Section 30 of the bill was dubiously added to enable the central government to prevent any increase in the rubber prices by notifying maximum prices to help the rubber product's manufacturing sector. Section 30 of the bill is just a reproduction of Section 13 of the act, on notification of minimum and maximum prices, and nothing new at all. This provision has been there from 1947 and the only changes made were omitting the PAC in 1954 and adding "if it deems necessary" in 2010 to avoid compulsion in the notification of prices in the context of a high court order. There is no change between the act and the bill with regard to the provisions on control of import and export of natural rubber, and the central government has similar powers even under Section 3 of the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act for all commodities (GOI 1992). The added power of the central government in the bill is vide Section 27, which enables it to supersede and reconstitute the board any time.

POWERS OF THE BOARD

The power to import rubber for sale, or to purchase rubber, in the internal market under Section 8A of the act is not included in the bill, but this was provided to be carried out only with the prior approval of the central government. Through Section 5 of the bill, the board is empowered to issue directions to dealers, exporters, growers, manufacturers, processors, and such other persons in the rubber industry and the contravention of such directions can lead to penalties under Section 9. The functions of the board have been expanded in the bill by including rubber products in research, technical advice, and export promotion. However, most of the functions additionally mentioned in the bill are activities already being undertaken by the board to a certain extent. Thus, in fact, the functions and powers of the board have not been undermined in the bill.

SUGGESTIONS

(i) Scope of the bill: Several sections in the act have been modified in the bill to include the downstream rubber products manufacturing and rubberwood sectors within its scope. This is appropriate as the legislation shall cover the entire rubber industry value chain as well as the ancillary sectors. Rubber products manufacturing sector consumes natural rubber, synthetic rubber, and reclaimed rubber (rubber recovered from used rubber products). In most of the products, combinations of natural rubber and synthetic rubber are used for better performance and properties, whereas in other products, reclaimed rubber is used for cost-effectiveness. It is appropriate to cover synthetic rubber and reclaimed rubber also in the legislation so that the entire rubber industry value chain is within its scope.

(ii) Representation in the board: The bill has included additionally the dealers, processors, exporters, and institutes or authorities specializing in research in the rubber industry as categories eligible for getting appointed as members of the Rubber Board. The act had specified the number of members in the board representing different segments, such as small growers, large growers, manufacturers, and labour interests.

(iii) Ex officio members in the board: The chairman, executive director and rubber production commissioner (RPC) are the ex officio members in the board as per the act. The bill includes the chief financial officer and secretary who head the finance and administration departments of the board also as ex officio members. The core functions of the board are plantation development and research activities handled by the rubber production department and the Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII), respectively, as substantiated in Section 3, under the objectives of the bill.

CONCERNS

- Declaring rubber cultivation as an industry: it would have many domestic legal implications, for instance if rubber plantation is not considered by courts as agricultural land it would have far reaching implications on bank loans etc.
 - The government is once and for all closing the doors of re-negotiating with the WTO to make rubber an agricultural product by explicitly defining rubber cultivation as an industrial activity.

to make rubber an agricultural product by explicitly defining rubber cultivation as an industrial activity.

- Confusions regarding quality standards: according to the bill quality standards to be implemented for all rubber produced in India and imported to India but it also adds that quality standards would be enforced for rubber produced in India and not for imported rubber.
 - ▶ It has been said that there is a huge pressure from very high levels on the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the Rubber Board to agree to import low-quality cup lumps.
 - ▶ The lumps are a form of unprocessed, often decaying natural rubber of uncertain quality. The above provision would make it easy to import poor quality, cheap rubber.
- Timely re-plantation: the Bill does not provide a framework for timely replanting of plantations once they cross their economic life.
 - ▶ The demand for rubber would more than double in the next decade and triple by 2040.
- Safeguarding the interests of small and marginal farmers: Concerns have been raised that the bill favors the industry and harms the interests of the growers. The bill defines a Grower as one who owns the state but it is not the case, the mean size of rubber holding is hardly 0.5 hectare.
 - ▶ Rubber growers are small and marginal farmers, and safeguarding their interests is crucial to sustaining rubber production in the country.
 - ▶ Natural rubber cultivation gives livelihood to more than 1.3 million households.
- Fixing a fair Price: The bill provides for fixing the minimum or maximum price for rubber however it does not provide for fixing a fair price, the Grower needs a fair price and not a minimum price.

Ritu

Implications of the declining rate of fertility and Rise in obesity

CONTEXT :

Recently some data released by the NFHS (National Family Health Survey). According to which the fertility rate at National level is continuously declining while obesity rises

INTRODUCTION :

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India. Recently this institute released data .
- This data shows that The Total Fertility Rate (TFR), an average number of children per woman, has further declined from 2.2 to 2.0 at the national level. There are only five States — Bihar (2.98), Meghalaya (2.91), Uttar Pradesh (2.35), Jharkhand (2.26) Manipur (2.17) — in India which are above replacement level of fertility of 2.1 as per the national report of the NFHS-5.
- This data also highlighted that institutional births increased from 79% to 89% across India and in rural areas around 87% births were delivered in institutions and the same is 94% in urban areas. This is a good thing that the people started trusting on institutional birth.

IMPLICATIONS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- We have to analyze the reasons for the fertility rate. One of the most significant reasons is late marriages. In urban areas most of the females are working professionals so they prefer marriage after their career settlement . Apart from it , because of the western culture , some couples prefer to live in a relationship without marriage and they (the lady)do not prefer to be an early mother so many of the time it has been seen that these people aborted many times . This is another cause of the less fertility
- The level of stunting among children under five years has marginally declined from 38% to 36% in the country since the last four years. Stunting is higher among children in rural areas (37%) than urban areas (30%) in 2019-21. We also have the fact that more than three-fourths (77%) children aged between 12 and 23 months were fully immunized, compared with 62% in NFHS-4.
- As the awareness and the infrastructure would be strong these health facilities would be diffused up to the lowest level of the society
- Besides, Some other data are also related to the health of the married women who usually participate in three household decisions (about health care for herself; making major household purchases; visit to her family or relatives) that the status of the women is rising gradually. They are participating in the decision making process . In this regard, Nagaland and Ladakh are one of the best in India . The Index for Nagaland is given 99% while for Ladakh is given 80 %. Rural (77%) and urban (81%) differences are found to be marginal.. However , because of the government policies, the number of women who have a bank or savings account has increased from 53% to 79% in the last four years. . In fact , direct benefit transfers come only in the account of the women therefore we see the increment in such numbers . However it should be in increasing mode gradually
- The data provided by NFHS explains that there is a continuous rise in obesity. At the national level, it increased from 21% to 24% among women and 19% to 23% among men. This data shows malnutrition or the impact of the office work culture . In some state this situation is more dangerous like Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, Manipur, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Punjab, Chandigarh and Lakshadweep where more than one third women are overweight

CONCLUSION

However, the data provided by the survey agencies do not always present the real picture of health . But these data are very much helpful regarding the evaluation of our health policies and the other benefits scheme. Through These data we can analyze the cause and consequences of the health

issues . We should change our lifestyle to reduce obesity because it is the cause of other health issues .

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

India's Relation with

INDIA'S RELATION WITH EUROPE

(GS Paper-II, Polity, Constitution, Governance, Social Justice and International Relations)

Source: Indian Express

WHY IN NEWS?

The visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Europe comes at a time when the region is experiencing its worst security crisis since the Cold War ended.

WHAT IS THE PM'S THREE NATION VISIT? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Mr. Modi and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz reaffirmed the two countries' alliance. Berlin also promised a ten-billion-euro investment in bilateral collaboration. Mr. Modi met with the leaders of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland in Copenhagen for the Second India-Nordic Summit.

The Prime Minister had fruitful conversations with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, during which the two leaders discussed India's unique 'Green Strategic Partnership' with Denmark. He also took part in a business roundtable between India and Denmark.

The Prime Minister met with French President Emmanuel Macron, who was just re-elected, in Paris.

In the wake of Russia's actions against Ukraine, he discussed bilateral and mutual interests, as well as regional and global trends.

In 2020, India and Denmark will upgrade their relationship to a Green Strategic Partnership in order to advance political cooperation, expand economic relations and green growth, create jobs, and strengthen cooperation on global challenges and opportunities, with a focus on an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THESE NATIONS OVER RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Germany's position—Like India, Germany has strong economic links with Russia, as it relies on Russia for over 40% of its gas imports.

While Russian aggressiveness has spurred Germany to increase its defence spending and join Western sanctions, it has been hesitant to deliver arms to Kyiv.

Mr. Scholz asked Russian President Vladimir Putin to put an end to the needless killings and evacuate the troops, saying that the only way out was through discussion.

Sweden and Finland, two of the Nordic five, are considering abandoning their decades-long neutrality and seeking NATO membership.

India's stance on the war- New Delhi has maintained a neutral stance on the conflict, drawing both condemnation and engagement from the West.

India has not voted on a UN Security Council resolution that condemns Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, citing the importance of dialogue in resolving issues.

The West has paid multiple high-level trips to India, with some top officials pressuring New Delhi to reduce commerce with Russia.

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR INDIA? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

India has managed to forge strong ties with both the West and Russia in the post-Cold War environment of relative stability in Europe.

The West is now attempting to weaken Russia, while Moscow warns of a new world war.

New Delhi faces a difficult task in forging a stronger strategic future with Europe without jeopardizing its complex but crucial relationship with Russia.

Unemployment in India

WHY IN NEWS?

India's unemployment rate rose to 7.83% in April from 7.60% in March according to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) .

IMPORTANT FACTS:

The urban unemployment rate has increased from 8.28 per cent in March to 9.22 per cent in April. Rural unemployment rate decreased from 7.29 per cent to 7.18 per cent.

Unemployment rate was the highest in Haryana at 34.5% followed by Rajasthan at 28.8%, Bihar 21.1% and Jammu and Kashmir 15.6%.

The sluggish domestic demand and the slow pace of economic recovery amid rising prices has impacted the Job opportunities.

Employment has fallen in India from 408.9 million in 2019-20 to 387.2 million in 2020-21 and then recovered to 401.8 million in 2021-22.

The recovery in 2021-22 was inadequate. As the Employment was stagnant 1.7%, or 7 million short of the employment level of the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20.

CONCERNS: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Near about 78 million jobs were lost during the period of June 2020, which roughly coincides with the first wave of COVID-19 and 13 million jobs were lost during the second wave during the period of June 2021.
- The unemployed who were actively seeking work but were unable to find any were estimated at 33 million during 2021-22
- Women lose jobs disproportionately during economic shocks and this repeated itself during the pandemic.
- The female labour force participation rate among urban women was as low as 9.4% in 2019-20 and fell to 7% in 2021-22.
- It was difficult to offer appropriate jobs in adequate numbers to aspiring women.
- When India was subjected to the most stringent lockdown in April 2020, 79 million small traders and daily wage labourers lost employment.
- The lockdowns showed both the vulnerability and the flexibility of this category of workers.
- The two big challenges that the pandemic has posed is employing women and providing salaried jobs are going to be difficult to tackle soon.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA: THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- MGNREGA-Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: to provide minimum 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- Atma Nirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) was launched to incentivize employers for creation of new employment along with social security benefits and restoration of loss of employment during Covid-19 pandemic.
- PMRPY-Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana: for incentivising employers for creation of new employment.
- NCS-National Career Service: to provide a variety of career related services like job matching, career counselling, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses, apprenticeship, internships etc
- Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (PMGKRA), is a 125-day Abhiyan , with a mission to address the issues of returnee migrant workers and similarly affected rural population by Covid-19 pandemic through a comprehensive strategy of providing immediate employment & livelihood opportunities to the distressed.
- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)-AJIVIKA:aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.
- PM- SVANidhi Scheme, to provide collateral free working capital loan to Street Vendors, vending in urban areas, to resume their businesses which were adversely affected due to COVID-19 induced lock-down.

- PMMY-Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana: is a scheme for providing loans up to 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises. The loans are provided by the Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, MFIs and NBFCs.

WAY FORWARD

- This situation of unemployment can be tackled by providing skill development training at an adequate pace.
- Greater investment needs to be directed to small enterprises rather than to large enterprises in order to bring about the employment objective and the output objective
- Central government needs to give a directive and incentive to the industries to train rural and tribal youth in their occupations so that skill development training can take place.
- Also there should be emphasis over providing social security to the poor, so that people do not die out of hunger and malnutrition.

Vivek Raj

