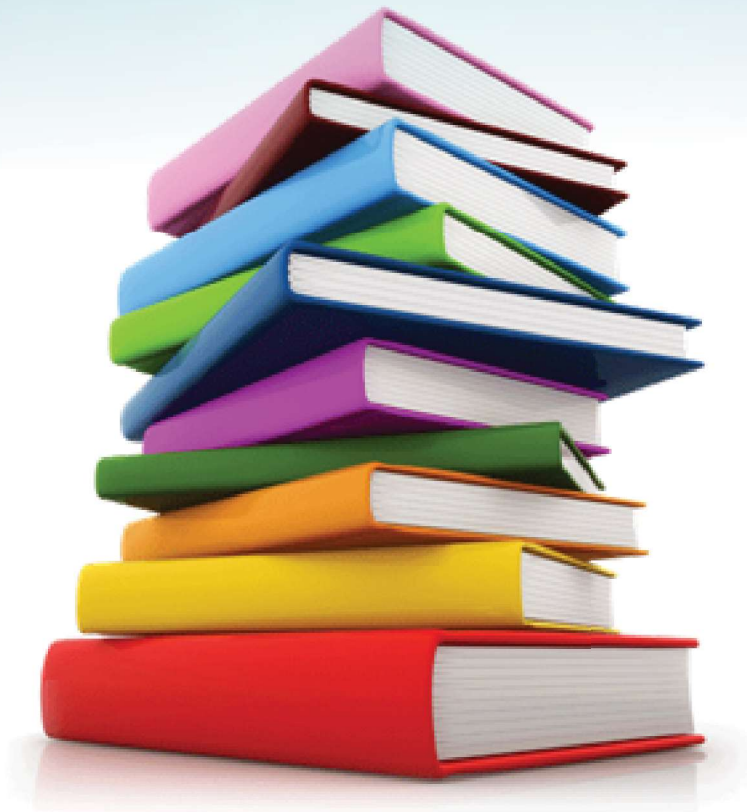




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CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAY 2022

Carbon – The Crop of the Future

CARBON – THE CROP OF THE FUTURE – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Carbon farming promises a new agricultural business model — one that fights climate change and creates jobs.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WITH MODERN INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE?

Agriculture is now a surgical economic activity that leads to the new epoch of corporate-environmental food monopolies with various issues including,

- Less food out of the ground
- Fewer nutrients
- Less efficient
- More expensive
- Greater environmental devastation

It has also kept a colonialist imprint on the planet with

- Differentiated access to nutritious food
- Reducing the biodiversity of our diet
- Injudicious ecological practices like monocropping and systematic erosion of soil
- Mounting cost of technology, chemicals exiling the farmers out of their fair share of the progress
- Deepening the climate change crisis

According to the 3rd biennial update report submitted by the Union government in 2021 to the UNFCCC, the agriculture sector contributes 14% of the total GHG emissions.

WHAT CAN FIX THE BROKEN FOOD SYSTEMS OF OUR TIMES? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Carbon farming promises a bold new agricultural business model in order to fight climate change, create jobs and save farms.
- Carbon farming is a whole farm approach to optimise carbon capture on working landscapes by practices that improve the rate at which CO₂ is removed from the atmosphere and stored in plant material and/or soil organic matter. The Hindu Analysis
- The total value of the global carbon markets grew by 20% in 2020.
- April 2022 has been the biggest year in carbon capture investment with big tech companies like Stripe, Alphabet, Meta and Shopify announcing millions of dollars of carbon removal offsets.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CARBON FARMING? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Profit for farmers– Carbon farming can help the farmers shift their focus from improving yields to functioning ecosystems and sequestering carbon that can be sold or traded in carbon markets. The Hindu Analysis
- It provides boosted/secondary income from carbon credits for the marginalised farmers.
- Soil health– It not only improves the health of soil but can also result in improved quality, organic and chemical-free food (farm-to-fork models)
- Decarbonisation- Soil acts as an efficient carbon sink and can be capitalised to achieve the Net Zero target and decarbonising pathway. The Hindu Analysis
- An initiative called “4 per 1000”, launched at the 2015 Paris climate conference, showed that increasing soil carbon worldwide by 0.4% yearly could offset that year’s new growth in CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel emissions.

Studies show that soil removes about 25% of the world’s fossil-fuel emissions each year.

WHAT IS THE CASE OF MEGHALAYA REGARDING CARBON FARMING? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- In India, Meghalaya is currently working on a blueprint of a carbon farming’ Act to create a prototype of sustainable agriculture model for the entire North-East region.
- Out of the 5.5 million hectares of cultivated land available in the North-East, organic farming barely covers 3% of arable land highlighting the tremendous potential.
- A pioneering Carbon Farming Act with a robust transition plan can effectively demonstrate

the idea of creating a carbon sink.

- It can improve nutrition, reduce the inequalities within farming communities, alter the land use pattern and provide the much-needed solution to fix our broken food systems.

Anshum Verma

Indic civilization and Indianness : An analysis

INDIC CIVILIZATION AND INDIANNESS – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Context : Indian culture and civilization has been the matter of our pride for thousands of years. Because there are some fundamental values of Indian culture which taught the lesson of peace , harmony and humanism to the world . for the unity of India , the Indian civilization plays a significant role

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Introduction : The history of Indian culture and civilization goes back thousands of years back. One of the oldest civilizations of the world evolved in the Indian subcontinent . One of the oldest and vast empires of the world was the Mauryan empire and one of the oldest political institutions and ideas existed in Indian culture . India is the birthplace of Jainism and Buddhist which taught the world the lesson of peace , non violence . Our culture spread beyond the boundaries of Indian subcontinent and reached up to south east Asian countries also

Our cultural heritage can glue all the Indians as a nation . But for some months, it is observed that the conflicting elements in the society are being more dominant over our rich cultural heritage . Actually our past cultural elements should be revived so that It could bring the national unity

THE IMPACT OF INDIAN CULTURE IN ABROAD : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Indian culture spread in southeast Asian countries like Java, Sumatra , Indonesia. However many of the Southeast Asian countries have opted the Islam but they do not forget their culture . the kings of Thailand are crowned in the presence of Brahmin priests. the Muslims of Java still use Sanskritised names. Garuda is Indonesia's national airline. Ramayana is the best-selling brand of clove cigars of Indonesia. The Philippines has produced a pop-dance ballet about Rama's quest for Sita who had been abducted by Ravana . The old Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya derived its name from the Indian Ayodhya. The Thailand is also associated with Indian culture. The Hindu Analysis

These cultural elements of India were brought here by the pacific merchants , saints not by the

Indian invaders . The pacifist has been the characteristic of the Indian culture

ARE WE CONSERVING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE ? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Unity in Diversity has been the fundamentals of Indian culture . For a long time we have been respecting the various belief systems. India is a “civilization-state” rather than a “nation-state. Some people , who believed that the Idea of Indian culture relates to the Hindu culture. In fact they forget the value system of Hinduism. Indian culture has been the hybrid of the various belief systems , religion , race etc . The modern Indian culture is the hybrid of the the influence of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and Sikhism. There are many Islamic elements which have been merged in Indian culture . Today, the Hindu wear Sherwani on every auspicious occasion. This attire arrived in India after the arrival of the Muslims . There are many Arabic, Persian and the Urdu terms merged in several sacred texts of the Hindus. Tulsidas also used many Arabic and the Persian terms in his Ram Charit Manas. We like Cricket which was brought after the arrival of the British . Nowadays this is the most popular game in India . Some years , all the Hindus voted for the Taj mahal as the world’s most surprising monument We did not vote for Ankorvatt . Therefore , it can be concluded that , communal harmony is the essence of the protection of the Indian culture

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

CONCLUSION

As per the above discussion , it is concluded that Indian culture is the hybrid culture in which the cultural elements of the various beliefs have been associated for a long time. All acceptability has been the characteristic of Indian culture . Indian culture is not the extremist Hindu culture . We should conserve our cultural heritage . Through our cultural heritage we can unite all the Indians as a nations.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

The Indian Patent System and Its Conflict with US Norms

THE INDIAN PATENT SYSTEM AND ITS CONFLICT WITH US NORMS – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

In a recent report, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) stated that India is one of the most difficult economies to protect and enforce intellectual property.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

HOW IS INDIA'S PATENT REGIME?

The Indian Patent Act of 1970 governs Indian patents. Patents are granted under the legislation if the innovation meets the following criteria:

- It must be unique.
- It must have novel steps or be non-obvious.
- It should be suitable for industrial use.
- It should not be subject to Sections 3 and 4 of the Patents Act of 1970.

Following its admission to the World Trade Organization in 1995, India became a party to the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.

The original Indian Patents Act did not offer patent protection to pharmaceutical items, but it was amended in 2005 to comply with TRIPS and was reintroduced after the 2005 revision. India has also ratified a number of IPR treaties, notably the Berne Convention (governs copyright). The Hindu Analysis

India has also ratified a number of IPR treaties, notably the Berne Convention (governs copyright), The Treaty of Budapest, The International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (Paris Convention)

The Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES RAISED BY USTR? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The USTR publishes the Special 301 Report on intellectual property (IP) every year.

It places trading partners on the Priority Watch List or Watch List if they do not adequately/ effectively defend and enforce IP rights or deny market access to U.S. inventors and creators who rely on IP protection. The Hindu Analysis

The United States Trade Representative's (USTR) 'Priority Watch List' continues to include India due to a lack of appropriate IP rights protection and enforcement.

Concerns have been expressed about what can be patented, how long it takes to get a patent, reporting requirements, and data security.

The US Trade Representative also raised concerns about the danger of patent revocation, the lack of a presumption of patent validity, and the narrowness of patentability requirements. The Hindu Analysis

Despite the passage of the Commercial Courts Act in 2015, the USTR study raised concerns about judicial delays.

It has also indicated opposition to the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021, which would abolish IPAB.

WHAT IS INDIA'S STANCE ON THE ISSUE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on IPR conducted a 'Review of the Intellectual Property Rights Regime in India' to address the challenges.

Section 3 and Section 3(d) of the Indian Patent Act deal with what does not qualify as an invention under the Act. The Hindu Analysis

The clause serves as a protection against spurious inventions, avoiding patent "evergreening," according to the Parliamentary Standing Committee.

By patenting only innovative and genuine inventions, Section 3(d) provides for generic competition. The Hindu Analysis

According to the report, it ensures the growth of generic medication manufacturers and public access to affordable medicines.

The Committee cites the Novartis vs. Union of India decision, which affirmed the constitutionality of section 3(d) and found it to be in compliance with the TRIPS agreement and the Doha Declaration.

WHAT IS THE DOHA DECLARATION? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The WTO member states endorsed the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health in 2021.

It recognises the seriousness of public health issues confronting developing and least developed countries, and emphasizes the need of TRIPS as part of broader national and international efforts to address these issues.

Among these options are:

- The authority to award obligatory licences and the conditions under which such licences may be granted
- The authority to determine what constitutes a national emergency or other extreme situations, such as public health emergencies.
- The right to create its own framework for intellectual property rights exhaustion.

WHAT POSITIVE STEPS WERE TAKEN BY INDIA REGARDING IPR? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Accession to treaties- One of India's recent positive initiatives has been to join the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Performances and Phonograms Treaty.

In 2018, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) signed the WIPO Copyright Treaty (also known as the WIPO Internet Treaties).

To eliminate redundancy of information submission by patent applicants in India, India produced a revised Manual of Patent Office Practice and Procedure in 2019 and a revised Form 27 on patent working in 2020.

After the IPAB was abolished, the Delhi High Court established an IP division in 2021, for which draft regulations have been made available for public opinion.

The Cell for Intellectual Property Rights Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been working to raise IP awareness in India.

Vivek Raj

Tackling the crisis of rising global food prices

TACKLING THE CRISIS OF RISING GLOBAL FOOD PRICES – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTRODUCTION- Global food prices are characterised by year-to-year volatility as well as steep and severe periodic price shocks that can lead to some sort of a crisis at the global and national levels.

The the form of crisis –

- Food shortages
- Trade disruptions

- Rise and spread in hunger and poverty levels
- Depletion of foreign exchange reserves for net food importing countries
- strain on a nation's fiscal resources due to an increase in spending on food safety nets,
- Threat to peace
- Threat to social unrest also in some places

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

BACKGROUND –

Historical data on food prices compiled by international agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Bank/International Monetary Fund show that since the onset and the adoption of Green Revolution technology in the early 1960s,

The world has been struck thrice by food price crises.

All the three food price crises during 1973-1976, 2007-12, and the recent one which began towards the end of 2020 have one thing in common — they were triggered by factors outside agriculture.

- They were not caused by any serious shortfall in agriculture production
- The interval between two consecutive price shocks has narrowed down considerably
- The severity of shock is turning stronger

THE RECENT SPIKE – THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The recent spike in food prices due to-

- COVID-19
- The Russia-Ukraine war
- The diversion of food for biofuel needs.

The current food price spike first began in vegetable oils and then expanded to cereals.

- The trade patterns of these commodities show that around 38% of the vegetable oil produced and consumed is globally traded.
- In the case of wheat, dependence on trade to meet global demand forms 25%, while only one tenth of rice output or consumption is traded.

- Trade dependence for maize is 16%. The Hindu Analysis
- The effect of global trade disruption will be higher for commodities that are traded more and vice-versa.
- The proportion of vegetable oil used for biodiesel increased from 1% in 2003 to 11% in 2011; it went up to more than 15% in 2021.
- When crude prices increase beyond a certain level it becomes economical to use oilseeds and grains for biodiesel and ethanol, respectively.
- The second reason for the use of food crops for biofuel is the mandates to increase the share of renewable energy resources. The Hindu Analysis
- Food prices are also expected to go up in the current and next harvest season because of an increase in the prices of fertilizer and other agrochemicals.
- The international price of fertilizer has increased by 150% between April 2021 and April 2022.
- The international price of a bag of urea (50 kg) has increased from less than ₹1,000 to more than ₹3,000 in the last 15 months.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Export and import in the agriculture sector constituted 13% of gross value added in agriculture during 2020-21.

When international prices go too low, India has checks on cheap imports to protect the interests of producers; and when international prices go too high, the country liberalises imports and imposes checks on exports to ensure adequate availability and reasonable food prices for domestic consumers.

- The policy of having a buffer stock of food staples has also been very helpful in maintaining price stability especially in the wake of global food crises.
- The importance of agriculture exports to mop up food and agriculture surplus from the country is increasing. The Hindu Analysis
- Ongoing trends in domestic demand and supply imply that India will be required to dispose of 15% of its domestic food output in the overseas market by 2030.

WHEAT EXPORT RESTRICTIONS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The recent ban on wheat exports and restrictions on the export of other food commodities by

India need to be seen in the light of an abnormal situation created by spikes in international prices.

- The international market is looking for around 50 million tonnes of wheat to compensate for the disruption in wheat exports from Russia and Ukraine.
- If India had not imposed a ban on wheat export, it would have resulted in a severe shortage of wheat within the country.
- India should continue with a policy of strategic liberalisation, as followed in the past, to balance the interests of producers and consumers.

The policy of buffer stock has also been very helpful in maintaining price stability in the face of global price shocks.

WAY FORWARD – THE HINDU ANALYSIS

As the steam of Green Revolution technology slowed down with the start of the 21st century, food prices began increasing in real terms. At the same time, the resilience of the food sector against price shocks has also weakened.

- The world requires new breakthroughs such as Green Revolution technology, for large-scale adoption in order to enable checks on food prices rising at a faster rate. The Hindu Analysis
- Requirement of increased spending on agriculture research and development
- There is a need to strengthen and rejuvenate the global agri-research system under the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) which is heading towards disarray.
- Biofuel protocols have contributed to the global food crisis for the second time in the last 15 years.
- Diversion of land under food crops and food output for biofuel should be carefully calibrated with implications for food availability. The Hindu Analysis
- The last three food price crises were primarily caused due to an increase in energy prices and disruptions in the movement of food across borders.
- Factors related to climate change are going to be an additional source of supply shocks in the years ahead.

The situation requires coordinated and timely action by the global community.

Rajeev Yadav

States Reluctance to cut Fuel Tax

STATES RELUCTANCE TO CUT FUEL TAX – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- After announcing the excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel, the Finance Minister had reiterated the Prime Minister's plea for States that had not cut their taxes since November 2021.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND?

- The price of the Indian basket of crude oil has risen by more than 33% since November.
- With a bulk of the surge coming in the wake of the Ukraine war in February, state-run oil marketing companies had raised retail fuel prices sharply over a 16-day period starting March 22. The Hindu Analysis
- As a result of the higher fuel prices and quickening food costs, inflation based on the Consumer Price Index accelerated to 7.8% last month, while wholesale price gains soared to a multi-decade high of 15.1%.
- So, the RBI intervened and opted to raise interest rates earlier this month.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE WITH THE CENTRE'S LEVY OF TAXES? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- In the past seven years, the Union government's levies on petrol had gone up substantially, resulting in a manifold increase in its revenues, but the States did not see a matching increase in their revenues.
- This is because the Union government has increased the cess and surcharge on petrol and diesel while reducing the basic excise duty that is shareable with the States. The Hindu Analysis
- The Centre is expected to transfer the unshareable cess to the designated reserve funds but the CAG has observed that the centre retained 40% of all cess collections in FY2019.
- The Union government had never consulted the States when it increased the taxes on petrol and diesel multiple times. The Hindu Analysis
- The exorbitant increase in taxes by the Union government has been only partially reduced through the cuts and the taxes continue to be high, compared with the 2014 rates.

WHAT IS THE STANCE OF THE STATES? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The Maharashtra government cut off its value added tax (VAT) levies on petrol and diesel

by Rs 2.08 and Rs 1.44 per litre respectively.

- Telangana Finance Minister termed the Centre's partial reduction of the cess levied on petroleum products 'bogus' and 'humbug'. The Hindu Analysis
- Tamil Nadu Finance Minister P.T.R. Palanivel Thiagarajan called for further cuts in the Union taxes as they had been hiked sharply since 2014.
- Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said he would consider if duty cuts were feasible.
- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had said that duty cuts would be possible only if Centre cleared its pending dues of about Rs 97,000 crore.

WHAT LIES AHEAD? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Fiscal measures that help cool price pressures and leave an extra rupee or two in the consumer's pocket can only aid to undergird vital consumption demand in the economy.
- All States must realise that the best way to safeguard their revenue interests would be to ensure that the growth momentum in the economy as a whole remains well supported.
- The policymakers at the different levels of government must realise this and act in concert..

Anshum Verma

Kabir : A great social and economic reformist thinker

KABIR : A GREAT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMIST THINKER – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- Context : Today , the followers of Kabir are celebrating this day as the Kabir Prakat Divas (Birth anniversary) . On this occasion many conferences , seminars and programmes are organized in India . Kabir was the most prominent thinker and philosopher of the medieval period . The birth anniversary of kabir is celebrated on the full moon (Purnima) in the Hindu month Jyestha

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- Introduction : Kabir was one of the great saints of the medieval period who showed the path of Bhaktism and monotheism to Indian people . He paved the way for communal harmony in India . He preached not only about the social reforms but also about the

economic reforms .Kabir openly criticized the orthodox elements of the both religions (Hindu and Muslims equally. He propagated the spirit of love, affection , and Bhaktism in the society . One side Kabir adopted the concept of meditation from Buddhism , Siddh and Naths , and Bhaktism of the Vaishnavas , on other side he openly criticized social , economical, religious, political inequality . In this way Kabir established the progressive and revolutionary ideology in the medieval period . The Hindu Analysis

- Up to maximum extent Kabir succeeded to influence contemporary society . He forced on the simplicity or ease of the religion . He stated that every human being has the right to access the god . God is of all human beings . No person of the society had privileges or specific rights to achieve God . Kabir openly criticized the superiority of Brahmanism .
- Kabir was the first saint of medieval India who remained Grahasth in his entire life and he propagated the dignity of labor. In his view all professions are equal . therefore he remained weavers in his entire life. The Hindu Analysis
- He did not adopt all the ideas of any religion. Although he criticized all the orthodox elements of every religion. Generally kbir used the name of Ram as his God . But this Ram of kabir was the symbol of Brahma/ Monotheism .

SOCIAL AND ECONOMICAL IDEAS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- In Indian culture, Buddha was the first who criticized casteism and opposed the superiority of Brahmanism . In fact , similar to the Buddha , Kabir also criticized the superiority of the race and caste also . He strongly condemned the caste system of the medieval period and played an important role in the unification of discredited Hindus . Kabir propagated that all are equal by birth . Through their karma , people get status in society . All professions are dignified and we should do our duty honestly .
- Kabir emphasized on Divine unity . many Hindu and Muslim became the disciples of the kabir .
- Kabir was the first person before Marx who raised his voice against the economical inequality and he stated that the root cause of every social and political issue lies in the economical inequality . Kabir Criticized the excess collection of the production also . he wrote that
- साई इतना दीजिये जामे कुटुंब समाये , मै भी भूखा ना रहूं साधु न भूखा जाये
- Sai, give so much that the family can be accommodated, I too should not remain hungry, the monk should not be hungry. In today's vocabulary, Kabir was a communist and raised the voice against every type of the exploitation

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

CONCLUSION

- As per the above discussion , in sum, it can be said that Kabir sowed the seeds of that ideology which paved the way for the communal harmony , idea of socialism , secularism and expulsion of the communal elements , simplicity . These ideas of the Kabir were not based on any self interest of the kabir . Therefore without any fear or favor he openly propagated his own ideas

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

Agnipath scheme of Indian Army : A Critical analysis

AGNIPATH SCHEME OF INDIAN ARMY : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- Context : Rajnath Singh, the defence Minister of Government of India announced the ‘Agnipath’ scheme for recruitment of youth in various armed forces on temporary bases (For four years). This scheme was announced by 14th of June 2022

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTRODUCTION

- The ‘Agnipath’ is launched by the Ministry of defense , Government of India . As per this scheme the youths of India would be recruited in Indian armed forces for 4 years . Very soon , the Indian government will announce the process of the recruitment . Only soldiers will be recruited through this schemes in all three services of the defense

BENEFITS / SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SCHEME : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- As the Government described , the scheme would be beneficial for the youth as well as for the Indian economy . The benefits and the Significance of this scheme can be analyzed as followings
- The youth can get employment during their study . During their training in the armed forces , they would be given some credits also and as per the New education Policy , they would be eligible for higher education also . After the fours years these you can pursue their higher study. The Hindu Analysis

- Their experience in the armed forces would be counted in every service of the government of India or state governments . they would be given preferences in the services of state police, para military forces etc
- During their employment , they would get a handsome salary (4.76 lakh in the first year to 6.92 lakh in the fourth year, apart from risk and hardship and other allowances as applicable.) and the life insurance . at the time of retirement , they would get Min 12 Lakh Rs and if any of them martyr , government would give 1 crore Rs as compensation. The Hindu Analysis
- The rate of unemployment would be reduced and the GDP of the country and per capita income will increase after this scheme
- 25 % of Agniveers would be adjusted for the regular service

DRAWBACKS OF THIS SCHEME : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Apart from these benefits some people raise some issues related to its drawback. The main opponent political party Congress also raised some issues in this regard. Congress said that Agnipath scheme for recruitment of soldiers into the Army, Navy and the Air Force, largely on a short-term contractual basis, alleging the decision could 'compromise' the efficiency and operational capability of the three Services. Congress also expressed their concern about the future of the youth.

- Apart from the criticism of the opponent political party , there are some issues related to the drawback of this scheme which should be tackled or addressed by the concerned authority . These concerns are
 1. Since this recruitment is short term recruitment , so the efficiency and loyalty of the soldiers may be affected
 2. After the expulsion from the armed forces , if these youth could not get job in any of the sector (Private , government , or in any business), they may be frustrated and their accumulated discontent may create the problem for law and order because , these discontented youth have been trained (army) and for the state police , their discontent would not be tackled easily . So government should make sure fort , that every Agnivir after the retirement should be adjusted in any of the services (Government/ Private or business)
 3. This practice may encourage the system of the contract recruitment in army in future which would be dangerous for the country

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

CONCLUSION

- As per the above discussion , it can be concluded that the Agnipath scheme is a revolutionary scheme through which ,On one side, the government will enhance the power of armed forces and on other side , it would provide the education to youth with fixed earning (Earning while learning) . However there are some grievances raised by some experts and the politicians, which should also be addressed by the government.

Dr. Anshul Bajpai

ISSUE OF MALNUTRITION AND ANAEMIA

ISSUE OF MALNUTRITION AND ANAEMIA – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTRODUCTION :

Good nutrition has the power to empower the present and future generations.

A child's nutritional status is directly linked to their mother. Poor nutrition among pregnant women affects the nutritional status of the child and has a greater chance to affect future generations.

Undernourished children are at risk of under-performing in studies and have limited job prospects. This vicious cycle restrains the development of the country, whose workforce, affected mentally and physically, has reduced work capacity.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT

While there has been some progress in tackling malnutrition among children and women over the past decade, the improvement has been modest at best.

This is despite declining rates of poverty, increased self-sufficiency in food production, and the implementation of a range of government programmes.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) has shown marginal improvement in different nutrition indicators, indicating that the pace of progress is slow.

Children in several States are more undernourished now than they were five years ago. The Hindu Analysis

- Wasting is defined as low weight-for-height
- Stunting is defined as low height-for-age.
- Anaemia is defined as the condition in which the number of red blood cells or the haemoglobin concentration within them is lower than normal.

A/C REPORT, There is a reduction in stunting rates (35.5% from 38.4% in NFHS-4) The Hindu Analysis

13 States or Union Territories have seen an increase in stunted children since NFHS-4 this includes Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Kerala.

A/C NFHS surveys, wasting has either risen or has remained stagnant over the years. The Hindu Analysis

India also has the highest prevalence of anaemia in the world

- The NFHS-5 survey indicates that more than 57% of women (15-49 years) and over 67% children (six-59 months) suffer from anaemia.
- Assam is among the low-performing States with a huge burden of anaemic cases — 66.4% of women (15-49 years) and 68.4% children (6-59 months) are affected.
- Developing countries lose up to 4.05% in GDP per annum due to iron deficiency anaemia; India loses up to 1.18% of GDP annually.
- Experts have pointed out that Saksham Anganwadi and the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) 2.0 programme have seen only a marginal increase in budgetary allocation this year (₹20,263 crore from ₹20,105 crore in 2021-22). The Hindu Analysis
- Additionally, 32% of funds released under POSHAN Abhiyaan to States and Union Territories have not been utilised.

India must adopt an outcome-oriented approach on nutrition programmes.

- There has to be direct engagement with nutritionally vulnerable groups (this includes the elderly, pregnant women, those with special needs and young children), and contribute toward ensuring last-mile delivery of key nutrition services and interventions. The Hindu Analysis
- This will ensure greater awareness on the one hand and proper planning and implementation of programmes at the grass-roots level on the other, which can then be replicated at the district and national levels.
- With basic education and general awareness, every individual is informed, takes initiatives at the personal level and can become an agent of change.

TO CONCLUDE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Various studies highlight a strong link between mothers' education and improved access and compliance with nutrition interventions among children.

We must ensure our young population has a competitive advantage; nutrition and health are foundational to that outcome.

The country's response to its burden of malnutrition and growing anaemia has to be practical and innovative.

Rajeev Yadav

ASHA WORKERS

ASHA WORKERS – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The WHO has recognised India's 10.4 lakh Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) as 'Global Health Leaders'.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHO ARE ASHA WORKERS?

The ASHA programme was based on Chhattisgarh's successful Mitadin programme, in which a Community Worker looks after 50 households.

- ASHA workers are volunteers from within the community who are trained to provide information and aid people in accessing benefits of various healthcare schemes of the government.
- They act as a bridge connecting marginalised communities with facilities such as primary health centres, sub-centres and district hospitals.
- Role – The role of these community health volunteers under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was first established in 2005.
- Eligibility– ASHAs are
 - primarily married, widowed, or divorced women between the ages of 25 and 45 years from within the community
 - must have good communication and leadership skills
 - should be literate with formal education up to Class 8, as per the programme guidelines

- Aim– The aim is to have one ASHA for every 1,000 persons or per habitation in hilly, tribal or other sparsely populated areas.
- Presence– There are around 10.4 lakh ASHA workers across the country, with the largest workforces in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.
- Goa is the only state with no such workers, as per the latest National Health Mission data available from September 2019.
- Salary– Since ASHA workers are considered volunteers, governments are not obligated to pay them a salary and most states don't.
- Their income depends on incentives under various schemes and all this adds up between Rs 6,000 to Rs 8,000 a month.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ASHA WORKERS? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Go door-to-door in their designated areas creating awareness about basic nutrition, hygiene practices, and the health services available
- Focus primarily on ensuring that women undergo ante-natal check-up, maintain nutrition during pregnancy, deliver at a healthcare facility, and provide post-birth training on breast-feeding and complementary nutrition of children
- Counsel women about contraceptives and sexually transmitted infections
- Motivate children to get immunised
- Provide medicines daily to TB patients under directly observed treatment of the national programme. The Hindu Analysis
- Screen for infections like malaria during the season
- Provide basic medicines and therapies to people under their jurisdiction such as oral rehydration solution, chloroquine for malaria, iron folic acid tablets to prevent anaemia, and contraceptive pills
- Get people tested and get their reports for non-communicable diseases
- Tasked with informing their respective primary health centre about any births or deaths in their designated areas

HOW DID THE ASHA NETWORK HELP IN PANDEMIC RESPONSE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- During the pandemic, when everyone was scared of the infection, ASHA workers had to perform a myriad of functions.
 - Check people for Covid-19 symptoms

- Inform the authorities and help the people reach the quarantine centres
- Explain the quarantine procedure to the people
- Provide the patients with medicines and pulse-oximeters
- Motivate people to get their vaccination shots
- Collect data on how many people are yet to get vaccinated

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES OF CONCERN? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- They get performance-based payments, not a fixed salary like government servants.
- In many states, the payout is low, and often delayed.
- They do not get any benefits like pension or health insurance.
- There have been agitations demanding employee status for ASHA workers.
- There is a strong argument to grant permanence to some of these positions with reasonable compensation as sustaining motivation.

Anshum Verma

The Reserve Bank of India has made it easier for cooperative banks to lend to the housing sector:

THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA HAS MADE IT EASIER FOR COOPERATIVE BANKS TO LEND TO THE HOUSING SECTOR – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHY IS THIS IN THE NEWS?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to raise the current limits on individual housing loans provided by cooperative banks.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHAT IS THE RBI'S CURRENT POSITION?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased the lending limits for individual housing loans issued by Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs).

Additionally, Rural Co-operative Banks (RCBs) would now be permitted to lend up to 5% of their total assets to commercial real estate or residential housing projects. The Hindu Analysis

Limits for tier 1 and tier 2 urban cooperative banks (UCBs) have been increased from 30 lakh to 70 lakh to 60 lakh to 140 lakh.

The limits for rural cooperative banks (RCBs) have been raised from 20 lakh to 50 lakh for those with a net worth of less than 100 crore, and from 30 lakh to 75 lakh for the rest.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF INDIA'S COOPERATIVE BANKS? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Co-operative banks are financial institutions that are owned and operated cooperatively by its members (the customers of a co-operative bank are also its owners).

In India, co-operative banks are separated into two groups: urban and rural.

Rural cooperative banks (RCBs)—RCBs can be either short-term or long-term. Short-term cooperative credit organisations are further classified into the following categories:

COOPERATIVE STATE BANKS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

District Central Cooperative Banks are a type of cooperative bank that operates in a district. Agricultural Credit Institutions (Agriculture Credit Institutions) (Agriculture Credit Institutions) Institutions with a long-term focus are Rural Development Banks and State Cooperative Agriculture Banks UCBs are either scheduled or non-scheduled urban cooperative banks.

There are two types of UCBs: scheduled and non-scheduled.

- UCBs with several states
- UCBs with a single state of operation

Co-operative banks are regulated in India under the States Cooperative Societies Act.

They are also regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under two laws.

- The Banking Regulations Act of 1949 was enacted to regulate the banking industry.
- The Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act of 1955 was enacted to make it easier for cooperative societies to operate.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS THAT COOPERATIVE BANKS FACE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- The advance to deposit ratio for UCBs is roughly 60% at the aggregate level, which is significantly lower than that of scheduled commercial banks.
- The fact that these banks' credit bases are smaller can be attributable to a variety of factors.

The Hindu Analysis

- Only leading states have a disproportionate presence of UCBs.
- Regulation-related concerns of duality
- credit limitations in high-potential industries such as housing
- Increasing non performing assets (NPAs) combined with a need to lend to the primary sector. The Hindu Analysis
- Banks' expansion through banking correspondents and FinTech acceptance
- Borrowings are a major source of income for the RCBs (27 percent of total liabilities compared to 1 percent of UCBs).

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF THE RBI'S MOVE? THE HINDU ANALYSIS

UCBs have a credit exposure of around \$3.25 billion, with one-third going to MSMEs and about 8% going to the housing sector.

The RBI's decision to increase credit to the housing industry will improve credit flow and protect banks from rising non performing assets (NPAs) by increasing the amount of secured loans available. The Hindu Analysis

UCBs and RCBs, on the other hand, must increase their asset base by expanding access through banking correspondents and seizing the current loan flow opportunity to the household sector.

Vivek Raj

India and Iran Relations

INDIA AND IRAN RELATIONS – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

During delegation-level meetings recently, India and Iran discussed boosting bilateral relations and strategic issues.

TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- The relationship between India and Iran has spanned millennia and has been distinguished by profound contacts. The two countries shared a border until 1947, and their languages, cultures, and traditions have a lot in common.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POLITICIANS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

On March 15, 1950, India and Iran signed a friendship treaty. In 2001, Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Tehran and signed the “Tehran Declaration,” which outlined areas where the two governments could cooperate.

It recognised then-Iranian President Mohammad Khatami’s concept of a “conversation among civilisations” as a model of international relations founded on values of tolerance, pluralism, and variety respect. Both sides signed “The New Delhi Declaration” in 2003, which outlined India and Iran’s.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE OBJECTIVE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

SECURITY

On security issues, India and Iran consult with one another. At the level of National Security Advisors and Deputy National Security Advisors, there are regular bilateral meetings.

RELATIONSHIPS ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

India’s trade connections with Iran have traditionally been dominated by Indian crude oil imports from Iran. In 2019-20, bilateral trade was \$4.77 billion, down 71.99 percent from \$17.03 billion in 2018-19.

Rice, tea, sugar, soya, medicines/pharmaceuticals, man-made staple fibres, electrical machinery, and other items are among India’s key exports to Iran. Inorganic/organic chemicals, fertilisers, cement clinkers, fruits and nuts, leather, and other items are all major imports from Iran.

CONNECTIVITY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

The deal for the Shahid Beheshti port of Chabahar, which includes an investment of \$85 million for port equipment, was signed during Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s visit to Tehran in May 2016. The arrangement also includes the provision of a line of credit in the amount of USD 150 million for the port’s development.

AID TO THE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

India has also stepped in to assist Iran in the aftermath of natural catastrophes and health crises. During the COVID-19 crisis in April 2020, India delivered supplies to Iran, including PPE kits and PCR machines.

CULTURAL RELATIONS : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

In 2013, an Indian Cultural Centre was established in Tehran. In 2018, the Cultural Centre

was renamed the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), and in 2019, it was given its own space. In 2018, 2019, and 2020, the International Day of Yoga will be held.

Sri Guru Nanak's 550th birthday was also commemorated. Yoga and Hindi sessions are held on a regular basis at the centre.

CONTACTS BETWEEN PEOPLE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Both countries have a strong commitment to promoting and facilitating people-to-people interactions. Every year, thousands of Indian pilgrims travel to the Shia pilgrimage circuit in Iran (Qom, Mashhad, Hamedan) and Iraq (Najaf and Karbala).

LATEST UPDATE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

India and Iran want to portray themselves as independent strategic actors committed to building a new multipolar order in their common Eurasian neighbourhood as well as globally.

Despite the challenges created by decades of US sanctions, Iran has continued to work on the multimodal International North-South Transport Corridor with India, Russia, and a few other Eurasian countries (INSTC).

CHABAHAR'S INTEGRATION INTO THE 13-NATION INSTC IS BEING PUSHED BY INDIA.

The two countries agreed to step up their efforts to develop a railway line connecting Rasht, Iran's Caspian port, and Astara, on the Iran-Azerbaijan border. The 130-kilometer route will link Iran's, Azerbaijan's, and Russia's railway networks.

Despite a number of geopolitical hurdles, the activation of an alternative Caspian Sea route says volumes about Iran, India, and Russia's hopeful perspective on this corridor.

Finally, against the backdrop of Russia's war in Ukraine and Western sanctions, Iran has been trying to persuade New Delhi to resume crude oil purchases that were halted in 2019 due to US sanctions threats.

INDIA'S CONCERNS

SANCTIONS BY THE UNITED STATES : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Following Iran's withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018, the US put sanctions on the country, which may have effectively devastated India-Iran commerce, particularly India's energy imports from Iran.

ANTI-IRAN ALLIANCE : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

New Delhi's surprise decision to join the Israel-India-UAE-US group, characterised as a

“anti-Iran” coalition, and accusations of Iranian assistance for Yemeni Houthis behind the drone strike on a UAE oil complex, in which an Indian was killed, looked to have strained relations.

STAKES IN TERMS OF STRATEGY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Iran also serves as India’s entrance point for trade with Central Asian countries, where India’s geographic reach is limited. India has been concerned about the strategic stakes of China’s growing influence in Iran. India’s access to the Chabahar port could be strategically crucial.

India may face governance and energy security concerns as a result of China’s growing connections with oil producers.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

India voted no during the recent IAEA vote on the US and its allies’ resolution to punish Iran. This is consistent with its policy of settling conflicts through discussion. India’s commercial connections with Iran could be boosted if the nuclear deal is resurrected. India and Iran must repair ties that have been harmed by recent global events.

India must strive to maintain political engagement with Iran in order to gain a deeper understanding of each other’s sensitivities, compulsions, and shared interests.

To achieve energy security, India must take the lead in establishing institutional structures with Iran and Afghanistan, as well as pursue the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline project.

Vivek Raj