NEWS ANALYSIS

1. RELIABILITY OF UNEMPLOYMENT DATA

Tags: GS Paper 3, Indian Economy and issues relating to Development and Employment.

Context: Recent reports on unemployment and its criticism.

Analysis:

- Union Minister of State for Home Affairs denied the allegations of growing unemployment which were based on the recent reports.
- The minister added that the infrastructure is improving, big companies are investing in various sectors, agricultural production has improved and crores of people are taking loans under the MUDRA schemes, which shows that the employment is increasing.
- According to him, some areas need to be worked on and the government is making efforts to improve the situation.

Unemployment 2018-2019 reports:

- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) is the key governmental agency in India at the national and state levels to study employment, unemployment and unemployment rates through sample surveys.
- There was no NSSO survey between 2012 and 2017, and a new survey was initiated in 2017–2018. This report has not been officially released by the government, but the report has been leaked to the media.
- According to the Pew Research Center, a significant majority of Indians consider the lack of employment opportunities as a "very big problem" in the country. According to the report, "About 18.6 million Indians were jobless and another 393.7 million work in poor-quality jobs vulnerable to displacement".

- Leaked NSSO report
  - A report on unemployment was prepared by the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO's) periodic labour force survey, but has not been officially released by the government.
According to the report, the 2017–2018 “usual status” unemployment rate in India is at 6.1%, a four-decade high, possibly caused by the 2016 demonetisation of large banknotes intended to curb the informal untaxed economy.

The report and the refusal of the government to release the latest NSSO report has been criticized.

The sample survey-based report states that India's overall population has declined since 2011–12 by 1.2% (contrary to the Census data which states a 6.7% increase).

The report also finds that India's percent urbanization and urban workforce has declined since 2012, which is contrary to all other studies on Indian urbanization trends.

According to NSSO's report's data, "the government has unleashed the most inclusive growth anywhere, and at any time in human history". The NSSO report also suggests the inflation-adjusted employment income of casual workers has dramatically increased while those of the salaried wage-earners has fallen during the 5-years of the present government.

NITI Aayog says that these are not official and the data is not yet verified. The Indian labor force is estimated to be growing by 8 million per annum, but the Indian economy is currently not producing new full-time jobs at this rate.

The government has claimed that the NSSO report was not final. As of September 2018, according to the Indian government, India had 31 million jobless people. The numbers are widely disputed.

**Measures taken by government:**

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005**
The Government of India has taken several steps to decrease the unemployment rates like launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which guarantees a 100-day employment to an unemployed person in a year to decrease.

**Steps taken on Disguised Unemployment**
- In recent years, there has been a decline in the dependence of population on agriculture partly because of disguised unemployment.
- Some of the surplus labour in agriculture has moved to either secondary or the tertiary sector.
- In case of the tertiary sector, various new services are now appearing like biotechnology, information technology and so on. The government has taken steps in these sectors for the disguised unemployed people in these methods.

**National Career Service Scheme**
- The Government of India has initiated National Career Service Scheme whereby a web portal named National Career Service Portal (www.ncs.gov.in) has been launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (India).
- Through this portal, job-seekers and employers can avail the facility of a common platform for seeking and updating job information. Not only private vacancies, contractual jobs available in the government sector are also available on the portal.

**Way Forward:**
- It’s true that decrease in the number of jobs is a concern India, as the country to unable to create as many job opportunities as there are number of unemployed people adding every year.
- But this can be resolved with various measures such as improving the quality of workforce by focussing on the job-oriented education and not rot-learning.
- New policies to reduce unemployment are the need of the hour according to the industry requirements.
- Small entrepreneurship should be encouraged to provide opportunities for self-employment.
- More employment should be generated in rural areas to check the migration to urban areas for work.
- There is a need of reorientation in the education policy to focus more on the development of workforce according to the needs of the industry.

**2. TWO NEW SPECIES OF GINGER DISCOVERED IN NAGALAND**

**Context:** Scientists from the Botanical Survey of India recently discovered two new species of Zingiber (ginger) in Nagaland.

**Analysis:**
- The discovered species are- Zingiber perenense discovered from the from the Peren district of Nagaland and Zingiber dimapurense from Dimapur district.
Zingiber dimapurense is taller in size, with leafy shoots measuring 90-120 cm high and leafy shoots of Zinziber perenense measure 70 cm in height.

More than 20 species have been found in the North-eastern India amongst the 141 species of Zingiber distributed throughout Asia, Australia and the South Pacific.

The high diversity of the ginger species in the north-east region also reveals that the climate is conducive for the growth of the genus.

More studies can help in ascertaining the medicinal properties of the newly discovered species.

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Add on for Prelims

**Botanical Survey of India (BSI)**

- BSI is the apex taxonomic research organization of the country and is under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.
- It was established on 13th February 1890 to explore, collect, identify and document the rich plant resources of the erstwhile British India.
- After independence, the BSI was reorganized in 1954.
- It now includes biosystematics research, floristic studies, documentation, databasing of National Botanical collection, digitization of herbarium specimens and capacity building training programmes etc.

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### 3. FACTORING IN SAFETY

**Tags:** GS Paper 3, Issues related to economy and employment.

**Context:** Occupational and Industrial safety in India as a growing concern for Central Government.

**Analysis:**

- Even after years of robust economic growth India’s record in the promotion of occupational and industrial safety remains weak.
- Making work environments safer is not given the required attention.
- This results in large number of fatalities and injuries to the labourers.
Accidents resulting from the weak industrial safety make it imperative that the Central government engages in serious reform.

**Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019**

- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019 was recently introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Labour and Employment.
- The Code applies to establishments employing at least 10 workers, and to all mines and docks. It does not apply to apprentices. Further, it makes special provisions for certain types of establishments and classes of employees, such as factories, mines, and building and construction workers.
- The Code repeals and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions. These include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.

**Bill’s shortcomings**

- Appointment of safety officers in the case of establishment with 500 workers is left to the discretion of State governments.
- The narrow stipulation on safety officers confines it to a small fraction of industries.

**Reality check**

The merger of more than 40 labour laws into four codes is an essential move, but it lacks in terms of scope.

**Pros**

- It merges 13 laws into one cohesive code
- Industries say it will curb inspector raj and improve productivity
- Talks about curbing unregulated growth of manpower suppliers, firms

**Cons**

- Does not cover the unorganized sector workers
- IT sector employees are outside its ambit
- Apprentices and administrative staff in firms were not considered as employees

41% of India workers feel they are not **paid well**

48% workers feel their **job is vulnerable**

31% of workers are working in **unhealthy conditions**

Approximately 48,000 people die due to **accidents at workplaces**

28.25% male workers work more than **48 hours a week**

13.32% female workers work more than **48 hours a week**

*Source: ILO, British Council of Safety, labour bureau*

**Way Forward:**

- A safe work environment is a basic right and India’s recent decades of high economic growth should have ushered in a framework of guarantees.
There is a need to ratify many fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation covering organised and un-organised sector worker’s safety, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981.

There is a need of systematic reform to empower workers.

The new code should take inputs from employees, employers and experts.

Industries using hazardous processes and chemicals deserve particular attention and the code should have clear definitions, specifying limits of exposure for workers.

Every possible measure should be taken by the government to avoid tragedy such as Bhopal Gas disaster.

**4. INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING**

**Tags:** GS Paper 2, Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

**Context:** Recently The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) mandated captioning for TV programming in order to make it accessible to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing population.

**Background:**
- The policy impetus for this decision is rooted in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 which made “sub-titles” on TV a right.
- This decision comes nearly four decades after the United States first implemented captioning for the same purpose.

**Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**

- Various Provisions of the Act:
  - Types of disabilities increased from existing 7 to 21
  - Speech and Language Disability and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time
  - Acid Attack Victims have been included
  - Right to free education for children with disabilities (6-18 yrs) and Reservation of 4% seats for students in higher education institutions
  - Penalties for offences committed against Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)
Analysis:

- Captioning on TV for the aurally-challenged is not new. Many countries have followed the U.S.’s lead.
- India’s mandate for TV captioning is significant for two reasons.
  - It is one of the first major countries in the Global South to embrace captioning for media access, Brazil being the other one.
  - India is the first country where the importance of captioning, or Same Language Subtitling (SLS) has been established for mass reading literacy.
- According to the latest FICCI-EY Media & Entertainment report (2019), India has a billion TV viewers.
- Film (24%) and general entertainment (53%) are the dominant genres. All of this content is now required to have SLS, in all languages.
- SLS in India if implemented as mandated is poised to make a massive contribution to SDG-4 on quality education.
- Studies in India are at global forefront of advancing SLS for reading literacy.
- India is in unique position to scale up SLS on TV for both goals: media access and reading literacy.

Same Language Subtitling

- **Same language subtitling (SLS)** is the practice of subtitling programs on TV in the same language as the audio.
- It was introduced in the early 1970s as a means to make services available to the hard of hearing.

SLS on TV would serve three goals:

- Daily and automatic reading literacy practice for one billion viewers, including 500 million weak readers who would benefit the most.
- Indian language improvement for one billion viewers.
- Media access for 65 million aurally challenged people.

Way Forward:

- If India is to achieve its commitment to SDG 4 on quality education, there is a need for solution backed by evidence and the collective power of the government, civil society, academia and the industry to implement them.
- Civil Society has shown how SLS can be implemented cost effectively, academia has provided strong evidence that SLS works remarkably well to achieve the multiple goals of media access, reading literacy and language learning.
- The entertainment industry should play its part by turning on SLS for audio-visual content in all Indian languages.