

TOPIC 1

Agriculture related employment in India

Relevancy

- GS Mains paper III
- Employment in Agriculture
- Informal sector employment

Introduction

- Agriculture plays a very important role in India's economy.
- Over 58 per cent of the rural households depend on agriculture as their principal means of livelihood.
- Agriculture, along with fisheries and forestry, is one of the largest contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- As per Central Statistics Office (CSO), the share of agriculture and allied sectors is expected to be 17.3 per cent of the Gross Value Added (GVA) during 2016-17.

Employment by Agriculture sector

- Accelerating to a higher agriculture growth rate is critical for attaining food security as is enhancing rural income, which presently is quite low.
- Agriculture provides employment to not only the adult males of a households but also to women.
- Women work extensively in production of major grains and millets, in land preparation, seed selection and seedling production, sowing, applying manure, weeding, transplanting, threshing, winnowing and harvesting.
- Hence it plays a significant role in overall socio-economic development.
- Therefore rapid and sustained growth in agriculture remains key priority for the country.
- But over time that as economies progress and move towards development, workforce tends to move away from primary sectors of the economy.
- But in India statistics tells us that Agriculture still is the major employment source (58%) to Indians.

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- In past GOI has set up high-profile committees to scour for employment opportunities.
- In 2001, economist Montek Singh Ahluwalia led a task force with precisely this mandate.

Impact of Demonetisation on Employment

- Joblessness has been quite high recently in India.
- It is official that Demonetisation led to an abrupt loss of 1.5 million jobs.
- This comes at a time when India is already facing a high unemployment rate.
- Every month, 1 million people join the work force seeking jobs, while employment generation remains low at around 0.2 million jobs a month.
- Most of the unemployment is spoken about in reference to formal sectors.
- But more than 90 per cent of India's employment is sourced from informal sectors.
- Demonetisation had a huge impact on the informal sector, with agriculture almost in distress.

Government failure to recognize the problem

- Current government seems to be focused too much on economic growth to generate employment as previous Governments.
- According to analysts this strategy does create employment as one per cent growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) creates a million jobs.
- But industry and other formal sectors are becoming highly automated and are increasingly creating fewer jobs, that too of high quality.
- Rural jobs, agriculture and government public wage schemes are being ignored continuously.
- Agriculture reported the least growth rate during that time and public investment was severely low.
- Government is making a mistake by not spending much on agriculture.
- It is also neglecting public wage programmes like the ones under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
- Dependence on agriculture is declining but it is still the source of sustenance for millions, and wage programmes are supplementary sources of sustenance.
- Failure of both means suffering in rural areas and high unemployment.

Corrective steps taken by the Government

- **Monetary stimulus:**
 - Government is planning a 50,000 crore stimulus to revive the economy.
 - This package will be targeted at the construction sector and also provide incentives for various industries like agriculture and allied sectors.
- **MGNREGA Reforms:**
 - It is suggested that the Government of India include of some agricultural activities (such as weeding, irrigating, sowing and cutting for harvesting) into the MGNREGA shelf of works and provide labour for specific crop interventions.
 - This would provide employment to the landless labourers.

TOPIC 2

Laws protecting the acts of civil servants from media

Relevancy

- GS Mains paper III
- Rajasthan ordinance
- Anti-corruption issues
- Silencing the media

Recently

- A Rajasthan ordinance has been passed to protect public servants facing allegations of corruption.

The Ordinance:

- The ordinance has highly shielded both serving and former judges, magistrates and public servants in Rajasthan from being investigated for on-duty action without its prior sanction from police investigations.
- It puts restriction on surfacing the names, photographs and details of public servants, judges and magistrates via any kind of media coverage like:
 - Printing
 - Publishing
 - Publicizing
- While amending Sections 156 and 190 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the ordinance lays down that if the sanctioning authority does not take a decision within six months, the prosecution sanction would be deemed to have been issued.
- Section 228-B: It relates to acts done in the course of discharging official functions of the concerned public servants.
- If anyone found violating the restriction will be punished with two years' imprisonment and fine, according to the ordinance.
- The government has reiterated that the new provisions had been made to protect honest public servants acting in good faith.

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Other provisions to protect public servants

- **Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:**
 - It makes prior sanction mandatory before a court can take cognizance of a case.
 - It may even paralyse an impending probe so that no investigating agency can approach a sanctioning authority without gathering any material.

Criticism of the ordinance

- This ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers.
- It is a grave threat to media freedom and the public's right to know.
- Media plays an important role to highlight the misdeeds and achievements of public servants before the common masses.
- It is seen as a curb on right to freedom of expression of media and right to know of public.
- It is seen as a regressive step towards adding more layers of protection to officials from corruption cases.
- Section 228-B is a direct threat to the functioning of the media and whistle-blowers as it puts unreasonable restriction on legitimate journalism and activism against venality.
- A two-year prison term for disclosing the identity of the public servants concerned is being criticized by many.
- **The Supreme Court verdict of May 2014:**
 - It struck down an earlier statutory provision for prior government clearance for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe against officials of the rank of joint secretary and above.
 - The court had observed that such a provision destroys the objective of anti-corruption legislation and blocks the truth from surfacing.

Conclusion

- Anti-corruption legislations in India are uncertain and vague at the moment.

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- Amendments redefining criminal misconduct among public servants so that bona fide decisions by officials do not result in corruption charges are yet to be passed.
- Also, the Lokpal Act is yet to be operationalised.
- Government should enforce a strong body of legislation that punishes the corrupt, protects the honest, and ensures time-bound public services and whistle-blower safety.

TOPIC 3

Strict rules of adherence in 'Indian Bureaucracy'

Relevancy

- GS Mains paper IV
- Indian Bureaucracy, emotional intelligence, Governance
- Ethics, Case studies

Recently

- A child died recently because her ration card was not Aadhaar card-linked, preventing her from receiving any food ration from the Public Distribution System.

Why bureaucratic system in society?

- Bureaucracy came into being after the birth of scripts in ancient civilisation.
- When a large amount of administrative data was created, a system was needed to retrieve the stored knowledge, which gave rise to archiving, cataloguing and classifying.
- More than writing, it was this method of retrieval that led to efficiency.
- These days there is a stress on objectivity leading us to strict paperwork.
- This leads to a curb on discretion and free thought.
- More paperwork and administration is becoming increasingly central.

'Bureaucratisation' of the world

- It became stronger with economies growing fast where administration became inevitable.
- But, the analysts have time and again stressed how the bureaucracy encourages cultivating helpless stupidity in both state and people.
- People have to vain to work through the bureaucracy to get welfare benefits.
- Pieces of paper with signatures and seals take hold of our world causing much unnecessary pain.

Bureaucracy in developing countries and India

- In developing world people are not “bureaucracy-receptive”.
- In India, everyone knows everyone else and independent bureaucracy cannot be executed independent of informal relationships among the stakeholders.
- When the state creates framework that overrides informal societies built in India, citizens become confused and find themselves at a loss to negotiate their space.
- Example an elderly would go the bank for queries rather than call customer care.

Changing from traditional to modern times

- Informal societies follow norms and customs that cannot be changed overnight.
- In Indian society, citizen-state interaction is built on patronage and personal relations while bureaucracy is new.
- It doesn't strike well with the centuries old traditions.
- Western societies that are individualised can successfully build independent regulatory bodies.
- But collectivist societies like India cannot follow strict bureaucratic rules.
- Therefore we should allow to build a framework for emotional bureaucracies.

A case for emotional bureaucracy

- In diverse societies, bureaucracies have to be contextual and emotional.
- It must be designed for everyone and not just for the urban elites.
- Regulations force people to change their behaviour and dynamics instantly.
- If the bureaucracy is not empathetic to those who are slow in responding, it will be hugely damaging to society as a whole.
- It will leave many distressed, dead, and devoid of compassion.

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Conclusion

- Strict adherence to rules may lead to ineffectiveness and strain.
- Hierarchy for instance, helps in encouraging central guidance, planning and discipline but also encourages timidity and red tapism.
- It robs the civil servants and public of their patience, tolerance and empathy.
- It discourages initiative and imagination and prevent full utilization of bureaucracy's human resources.

TOPIC 4

Alliance of Kurds and Iraq and formation of 'Kurdistan'

Relevancy

- GS Mains paper
- International relations
- Alliance of Kurds and Iraq, Islamic state
- Formation of 'Kurdistan'

Background

- A conflict broke out in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk between Iraqi government troops aided by Shia militias and the Peshmerga, the military wing of Iraqi Kurdistan.
- This shows the divisions that run deep in the country.
- Both government troops and the Peshmerga are part of the coalition that is fighting the Islamic State in Iraq which are also American allies.
- **Role of the United States in this issue:**
 - The U.S. provides air cover in the war against the IS
 - It offers military advice to Iraqi troops
 - It also supplies weapons for the conflict
- Peshmerga has also received arms from the U.S., Germany, the U.K. and other western countries.
- The U.S. also has a consulate in Kurdistan where hundreds of its diplomats and their families live.
- But nothing has prevented the conflict in Kirkuk, that was captured by the Peshmerga from the IS in 2014.

Why alliance of Kurds and Iraqis?

- The alliance between the Kurds and Baghdad is tactical rather than strategic.
- In 2014, after the IS scored a series of military victories in Iraq, including in the cities of Fallujah, Ramadi, Kirkuk and Mosul, both Baghdad and Erbil were threatened by the prospect of IS advances.

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- Iraq and Kurdistan leaders set aside their historical differences and joined hands against a common enemy.
- But at that time the Islamic State was in retreat.
- Most of the cities it captured including Mosul were freed.
- This receding Islamic State threat has exposed cracks in the alliance.

Fight over 'Kirkuk'

- The Kurdish political leadership's push for independence from Iraq alarmed Baghdad.
- Masoud Barzani, President of Iraqi Kurdistan, wanted to mobilise the momentum created in the battle against the IS in favour of independence.
- Despite strong opposition from Baghdad and western allies, Barzani held a referendum recently in which Kurds voted for independence.
- Though the vote is not binding on the Kurdish regional government but it has strengthened Kurdish nationalist politics across borders.
- Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi rushed troops to retake vulnerable Kirkuk.
- Mr. Barzani's move was politically counter-productive but resulted in a chaos.
- Though he is not in a position to achieve independence for Kurdistan, and has offered to step down as President.

Aggravation of the crisis

- The new Kurdish leader may lack charisma or authority but will have to deal with stronger nationalist aspirations.
- Baghdad has sent a tough message to Erbil by sending troops to Kirkuk.
- If the Kurds go ahead with plans to secede it would only invite a strong military response.

Conclusion

- The cracks in the coalition would prove to be beneficial for Islamic State.
- The only country that could help in the conflict is the U.S. because it enjoys good ties with both Baghdad and Erbil.

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- It should mediate between the two sides on the Kurdish national independence issue.
- Otherwise the chances for another civil war in Iraq remain high.