



VEDHIK DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD


We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus.

It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Hameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

We welcome your valuable comments so that further improvement may be made in the forthcoming material. We look forward to feedback, comments and suggestions on how to improve and add value for students. Every care has been taken to avoid typing errors and if any reader comes across any such error, the authors shall feel obliged if they are informed at their Email ID.



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A guarantor of free speech

The Constitution, unlike scriptures, allows criticism of itself



K. CHANDRU

The LDF government's biggest mistake was to get Kerala Minister Saji Cherian to resign over his remarks on the Constitution. Mr. Cherian had said the Constitution is "British-crafted and anti-working class." The writers of the Constitution inserted a few words such as "secularism" and "democracy" here and there, but this did not take away from the fact that the Constitution is a "tool to exploit the common man," he said. Is there any evidence that Mr. Cherian reneged on the oath he took as an MLA and as a Minister?

Amendments to the Constitution

The Indian Constitution is fundamentally liberal. There is no stipulation that makes contempt of the Constitution a serious felony. In fact, Article 19(1) guarantees freedom of expression with which one can even criticise the working of the Constitution. Criticism over Mr. Cherian's remark that the British dictated the Constitution does not hold water. The Constituent Assembly, which drafted the Constitution, borrowed heavily from the Government of India Act, 1935, which was introduced and used by the British for over 12 years in this country. The Constitution is not a holy scripture, but an organic document. The word 'secular' was not found in the original text adopted, but was inserted under the 42nd Amendment.

Many amendments have been made in the Constitution to remove the bias of judgments of higher courts. When Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister announced that 14 banks would be nationalised, the move was challenged in court by the affected banks. The Supreme Court held the Act void. The Mrs. Gandhi government's bill to abolish privy purses was passed in the Lok Sabha, but defeated in the Rajya Sabha. President V.V. Giri then withdrew recognition of all rulers under Article 366(22), which the Supreme Court held unconstitutional. These court decisions led Parliament to introduce the 24th and 25th Amendments to the Constitution. While speaking in support of the amendments, many members of Parliament criticised the judiciary and expressed their dismay over the inadequacies found in the Constitution. P. Ramamurthi of the CPI(M) even went to the extent of describing the Constitution as a representative of the bourgeois landlord state. In the light of these developments, the Marxist party's Central Committee discussed proposing substantial amendments to the Constitution. Just be-

cause party cadres contest elections, it does not mean that they are satisfied with the working of the Constitution. They are entitled to criticise the Constitution and work for changes as per their theory of social justice.

In 1967, when E.M.S. Namboodiripad, or EMS, said that the judiciary cannot rise above the economic system and is always subordinate to it, a contempt case was filed against him and he was punished by the Kerala High Court. The Supreme Court, which upheld the conviction, said that EMS did not have a full grasp of Marxism. Nowhere was the judiciary's subordination to the economic system mentioned in Marxism, it said. The Marxist party fully supported EMS then. Today, however, it has left Mr. Cherian, who expressed similar sentiments, high and dry.

There are examples of people being taken to court for constitutional infringement. In 1986, for instance, while protesting against the imposition of Hindi, K. Anbazhagan and nine other DMK legislators burnt Part XVII of the Constitution. A case was filed to remove them from the legislature. The Madras High Court accepted the plea and they were disqualified from the legislature. The charge against Mr. Cherian does not come anywhere near this. If his speech was not palatable, his party members could have given him an advisory and told the agitating Opposition workers to try their luck with the judiciary.

Changes to the Constitution

It is not as if the Constitution has never been questioned. After the Babri Masjid demolition, the Sangh Parivar started a campaign saying all matters cannot be decided by courts and demanded changes to the Constitution. In 2000, the NDA government appointed retired Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah to head a committee to review the working of the Constitution. The present NDA government has amended the Constitution to implement its own agenda. By repealing Articles 35A and 370, it has done harm to the integrity of India. Deviating from the constitutional norm of rendering affirmative justice to the socially and educationally backward classes, it introduced the 103rd Amendment to provide reservation for economically poorer sections. No one demanded that the BJP leadership quit for these actions; instead, aggrieved persons took the issues to court. Similarly, if Mr. Cherian's statement was offensive, the agitating persons should have gone to court. His speech was not against Marxist theory on the character of the state and its working Constitution. Removing him from the Cabinet gives the message that the party doubts even the Marxist understanding of the Constitution.

Justice K. Chandru is a former Judge of the Madras High Court

A new judicial device for 'complete justice'

India's top court cannot be seen to be helpless when faced with issues of individual liberty



KALEESWARAM RAJ

Mohammed Zubair, the co-founder of Alt News, continues to be in prison despite the Supreme Court of India, last Friday, granting him interim bail, because of remand in another case by the Delhi police. The Court was aware of the futility of the bail order. Yet, the Court did not direct his release by granting him bail in the other case too.

The order relates to a case challenging the Allahabad High Court's judgment refusing to quash the First Information Report (FIR) against Mr. Zubair. The charge was under Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) – outraging religious feelings ... by insulting religion or religious beliefs. Later, a charge under Section 153-A IPC, of promoting religious enmity, was added.

It was explained to the Court that there was not even a *prima facie* case against Mr. Zubair. Also, it was shown that the case itself was a device to crush dissent. The political malice behind the charge was very obvious. The Court also seemingly accepted the contentions, as evident from the grant of bail. Yet, the Court said the order was with respect to only the case registered in Uttar Pradesh. This has meant the continued detention of Mr. Zubair.

Challenges before judiciary

The Supreme Court of India is regarded as the world's most powerful top court, on account of its wide power of judicial review. It has the jurisdiction to issue writs under Article 32 of the Constitution. It also has the original jurisdiction under Article 131 of the Constitution. There is also wide appellate power under Articles 132, 133, 134 and 136 of the Consti-

tution. More significantly, the Supreme Court has the power to "make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it", as per Article 142 of the Constitution. Yet, the top court has shown itself to be helpless when issues of individual liberty have been placed before it on very many occasions. Many political prisoners languish in prison after their bail pleas have been repeatedly rejected by different courts. The executive is able to register multiple FIRs in different States of India so as to ensure that the dissident is not released from prison even if bail is granted in some of the cases. Thus, the jail jurisprudence of the executive effectively surpasses the Court's bail jurisdiction. Reports say that after the Supreme Court's order, another warrant was issued against Mr. Zubair by a local court in Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh. This scenario, which reflects the new normal in the country's criminal jurisprudence, poses crucial challenges to the judiciary.

The Supreme Court cannot afford to be conventional if it really wants to tackle this situation where an aggrandising executive hunts its opponents in a systematic and incremental way. Conventional legal wisdom proclaims that every criminal case is a case which requires to be dealt with as such and taken to its logical conclusion. Even in Mr. Zubair's case, the contention of the Solicitor General of India was that "any order passed by (the Supreme) Court (in this case) will interdict four judicial orders passed by two courts which have not been challenged". It is the Court's inability to overcome this line of argument by invoking the spirit of Article 142 that led to the ironic predicament of Mr. Zubair being in jail, despite the grant of the 'interim bail'.

The practice of registering multiple FIRs is extremely problematic. In the context of free speech, American legal scholar Professor Vincent Blasi identifies "historical



periods when intolerance of unorthodox ideas is most prevalent and when governments are most able and most likely to stifle dissent systematically". The situation in India is illustrative.

More 'rule by law'

The criminal justice system in such tough times degenerates into rule by law, that replaces rule of law. The law becomes an effective device in the hands of the Government for the purposes of a witch-hunt and this operates against the opponents of a regime, as a class. In this scenario, if the Court erroneously presumes that the nation's legal system is governed by the principle of rule of law, fallacies and unjust consequences are bound to occur. In such a legal ambience, it will be equally fallacious to treat each case as isolated, as in reality, it is not so. Climatic changes in a nation's constitutionalism are a hard reality which no court can ignore.

Even in challenging times, a constitutional court should be able to evolve a mechanism of its own to preserve the democratic foundation of the country by intervening in the incremental process of nation's "deconstitutionalisation". Professor of law Rosalind Dixon in a recent study says that "at least under certain conditions – of sufficient independence, political support and remedial power – courts can too play an important role in buttressing democratic processes and commitments", and this, according to her, "is the essence of responsive judicial re-

view". The constitutional courts in Colombia and Brazil have developed the new doctrine of "unconstitutional state of affairs". This enables the court to address structural deficits with a sense of realism and to pass effective orders even by deviating from procedural rigour, with a view to protect fundamental rights. This is, in certain ways, akin to the practice of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India and structural injunctions in the United States.

Create a judicial atmosphere

The courts, no doubt, may sometimes subserve the interest of the executive. This may even pose a serious threat to personal liberty, as it happened recently in its observations against activist Teesta Setalvad and former police officer R.B. Sreekumar. But in certain rare situations, it could still act as a determined umpire who checks the executive's excesses. The Supreme Court's intervention in the Centre's COVID-19 vaccine policy and the Pegasus episode illustrates this point. The need is to expand the latter approach and to create and perpetuate a democratic judicial atmosphere that supports the cause of freedom.

At least in principle, the Indian Supreme Court is constitutionally equipped with the power to invoke its jurisdiction for the larger cause of liberty, even by deviating from the conventional technical route. The "complete justice" under Article 142 is meant to be used when the legalistic arguments such as those raised by the state in Mr. Zubair's case have the effect of sabotaging the goal of constitutional justice. The Court needs a new version of judicial activism, which the Court itself evolved, in the 1980s.

The genesis of Article 142 shows that the makers of the Constitution have consciously incorporated this provision by drastically modifying the earlier corresponding provision in the Government of India Act, 1935. The Government of India Act, by way of Section 210(2),

only said about the enforceability of the orders of the Federal Court. It did not, naturally, contain an idea of complete justice in the constitutional sense. Article 142, on the other hand, arms the Supreme Court with this supplemental power.

The interpretation of the scope of this provision has been varied, and sometimes even conflicting. Some judgments pleaded for its restrictive use while some others did for its liberal and contextual application. In *Delhi Development Authority vs Skipper Construction Company* (1996), the top court said that the power under Article 142 should remain "undefined and uncatalogued, so that it remains elastic enough to be moulded to suit the given situation".

Treat them as a class

It is essential for the Supreme Court of India to treat political prisoners and dissenters facing multiple FIRs and undergoing unjustifiably long incarceration as a class. It needs jurisprudence at the normative level to tackle the technical arguments that create a false notion of rule of law when the very cause of arrest and detention is the lack of it. When a glaring instance of curtailing a person's freedom is placed before the top court, it should be capable of calling for the records pertaining to the multiple FIRs and to *suo motu* add all the stakeholders as parties (if needed); the Court should immediately ensure that vindictive incarceration does not continue even for a day. This might be difficult, yet not impossible. Mr. Zubair's case is one (like many other cases in the past) that demonstrates the juridical deficits of today's Supreme Court. It is, therefore, an imperative to evolve an effective jurisprudence of "complete justice" by focusing on personal liberty. It is the praxis of this new judicial device that can, perhaps, preserve the country's democratic legacy.

Kaleeswaram Raj is a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India

Rightful challenge

Twitter case should lead to changes in IT rules that will protect free speech

By moving the Karnataka High Court challenging several blocking orders from the Union government on content posted on its website, Twitter, Inc. has finally decided to take the bull by the horns on the issue of freedom of expression on the online platform. A cynical view will regard this as action done under duress – between February 2, 2021 and February 28, 2022, Twitter was issued directions to block 1,474 accounts and 175 tweets in India, with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology suggesting in June that it was giving the company a final opportunity to comply with the directions. But a substantive look at the challenge in the court by the company – 39 URLs in specific in its petition – suggests that Twitter is right to take up the gauntlet. Much of the content in these URLs deemed to be fit for takedowns is either journalistic or of a political nature, or even dissent. For example, some of the tweets were by farmers and others during their agitations against the farm laws. Twitter is also accurate in suggesting that the Government has not complied with rules under the Information Technology (IT) Act which call for a hearing of the author of the content besides the intermediary before any takedown action. The provision of these rules was one of the key reasons why the Supreme Court had upheld the constitutionality of Section 69A of the IT Act (in *Shreya Singhal vs Union of India*, 2015), which empowers the Government to restrict access to online content in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of the country, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or for public order. It is quite clear that the Union government has used the public order and national security argument in a blanket manner to get Internet platforms such as Twitter to take down content or to seek removal of profiles even if they merely constituted political dissent or were not remotely connected to the reasons proffered by it.

The Internet and telecommunications system has become an even greater behemoth than what it was when the IT Act was framed in 2000. To expand the scope of regulations to the new forms of intermediaries that have cropped up since then, the Government most recently came up with the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which, besides bringing about obligations for accountability from social media companies and platforms, went on to add onerous requirements such as traceability of online conversations and new oversight functions that are weighted in the Government's favour. Twitter's case in the Karnataka High Court should lead to greater scrutiny of the Rules and to a clear legislative debate on how to remake them in a way that they do not impinge on the right to freedom of expression and privacy in the online space.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Mediation Bill: Not getting the Act together

While it contains many pluses, the Bill needs improvement in some crucial places

THE GIST

■ The Bill recognises that mediation has come of age and needs to be treated as a profession, which is a huge improvement over the part-time honorarium basis it had in the court-annexed mediation schemes.

■ The governing mechanism, which is the Council, has three members: a retired senior judge, a person with experience of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) law and an academic who has taught ADR. It does not have even one single mediator in the body.

■ While the government has called for comments on the draft Bill, what is missing is the element of focused and engaged discussion after comments are sent.

SRIRAM PANCHU

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice has recommended substantial changes to the Mediation Bill. The panel has particularly cautioned the Centre against making pre-litigation mediation compulsory. In this article dated December 8, 2021, Sriram Panchu explains the good, the bad and the sad of the much disputed Mediation Bill.

Over the last 15 years, the dispute resolution landscape in India has undergone significant change with the advent of mediation. To house this consensual creature in the same stables as thoroughbreds of adversarial litigation and arbitration was a challenge, and even more to ensure that they got on reasonably well, working in tandem in inventive ways like arbitration-cum-mediation and vice versa.

It seems to be the way of the world that when something becomes prominent, there must be a law to regulate it. And so with mediation. While scattered mention was made of its use in several statutes, including commercial and consumer disputes, there was no comprehensive statute providing for all dimensions of the mediation process and its practice. Such a need was articulated in several quarters, notwithstanding doubters and dissenters who insist that regulation will kill the free spirit that mediation embodies. A group of senior mediators was set up by the Supreme Court Committee in charge of court-annexed mediation process, and over a period of several months, a draft Bill emerged which then started to make its way through the labyrinthine processes of governmental and legislative mandarins. The resultant Bill titled the Draft Mediation Bill 2021, slated for presentation now to Parliament, bears no resemblance to the original in some crucial places. It reminds the mediation community of an old Clint Eastwood film – the Good, the Bad, and the Sad (tweaked).

The good

The Bill recognises that mediation has come of age and needs to be treated as a profession, which is a huge improvement over the part-time honorarium basis it has in the court-annexed mediation schemes. The Bill acknowledges the importance of institutes to train mediators, and service providers to provide structured mediation under their rules. It provides for pre-litigation mediation. This is quite a remarkable step, but is designed to be easy to implement. Parties are required to have at least one substantive session with the mediator where the process is explained to them. Thereafter they are free to continue or terminate the mediation and follow the litigation path if they so decide. Further, if any urgent interim order is needed, they can bypass mediation at the first stage and return to it after resolving the interim relief issue.

Another plus is that the Bill does away with the confusion emanating from using both expressions

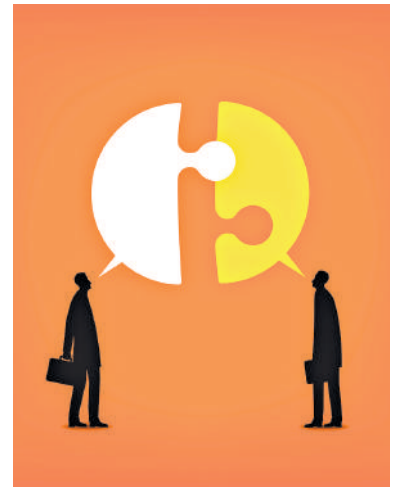
“mediation” and “conciliation” in different statutes by opting for the former in accordance with international practice, and defining it widely to include the latter. It recognises online dispute resolution, a process that is going to move mediation from the wings to centre stage in a world that COVID-19 has changed. It provides for enforcement of commercial settlements reached in international mediation viz between parties from different countries as per the Singapore Convention on Mediation to which India was a notable signatory. The Convention assures disputants that their mediation settlements will be enforced without much difficulty across the world, unlike the fresh headaches that the litigative decree or arbitration award present at the time of enforcement.

The bad

Leading in from the last point, it is expected that this Bill would make India a hub for international mediation in the commercial disputes field, and indeed institutions are being opened for this purpose. Exactly the reverse may happen. This is because the Bill unwisely treats international mediation when conducted in India as a domestic mediation. The settlement under the latter is given the status of a judgment or decree of a court. Now, that is excellent for cases between Indian parties, but disastrous when one party is foreign. The reason is that the Singapore Convention does not apply to settlements which already have the status of a judgment or decree. Ergo, if you conduct your cross-border mediation in India, you lose out on the tremendous benefits of worldwide enforceability. In sum, go to Singapore or Sri Lanka or anywhere else other than India to conduct your mediation. If this drafting mismatch is not remedied, dreams of our robust hubs and ease of doing business in India are neatly nipped in the bud.

Then comes the governing mechanism, the Council. It has three members: a retired senior judge, a person with experience of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) law and an academic who has taught ADR. This is an all-powerful body which regulates, certifies, accredits, plans, governs, etc., and it doesn't have a single mediator. Judging from the fact that these are full-time members, it is clear that none of them will be active practitioners. Most likely we are looking at sinecures for the bureaucratic and academic world. Certainly this Bill will be unique where a profession is being regulated without a single professional on the regulator. Try doing that to lawyers, doctors and accountants. And one more lapse – this is the field of dispute resolution, the judiciary's domain, so how come the Chief Justice of India is not in the picture for making appointments?

Then there is a long list of disputes which should not be mediated. Some of them look understandable at first sight but unnecessary at second. Fraud, for example. It is standard practice



in litigation to make as many and as serious charges as possible; that doesn't prevent parties from settling, and these accusations are disposed of by retraction or apology or simply ignored. In cases involving minors or persons of unsound mind, the law provides for the court to pass orders to protect them. All that is necessary is to provide that any settlement of disputes involving them needs the court's approval, not to deny the possibility of a beneficial mediated settlement. Patents and copyright cases settle on commercial terms leaving untouched the validity of the grant, so why deny this possibility and consign the parties to litigative longevity? In the case of telecom, why can't manufacturers and service providers and consumers be allowed to talk and resolve issues?

The sad

Why can't we get our act together to get the Mediation Bill in good shape? Why can't all the stakeholders get this Bill together? Mediators, lawyers, judges have applied their minds to a considerable degree. To be fair to the government, it did call for comments on the draft Bill. What is missing is the element of focused and engaged discussion after comments are sent. It is as though a wall has been erected and no one knows what is going to emerge. We all have a common purpose: to place mediation strongly in our legal landscape, and place India prominently in the world's mediation landscape. Even if it takes more discussion and consideration amongst all stakeholders, let that be done. It is for Parliament now to do the needful. We should not settle for less.

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At above 7%, retail inflation stays stubborn

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

India's retail inflation inched lower to 7.01% in June, from May's 7.04%, but stayed stuck above the 7% mark for the third straight month. Price gains also exceeded the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6% for the sixth month.

Rural inflation edged up to 7.09%, from 7.08% in May, while urban consumers faced a 6.92% price rise, as per the Consumer Price Index released on Tuesday. Food price inflation, as per the Consumer Food Price Index, eased to 7.75%, from 7.97%, but remained above 8% in urban areas, at 8.04%.

Higher costs for cereals, and vegetables such as tomatoes, as well as milk and meat, clothing and footwear and services, were balanced out by slower price gains in edible oils and fuel, following excise and import duty cuts.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasised the need to keep a constant vigil on prices and sustain growth impulses.

“Till the start of the second half... the central bank and the government will have to be extremely mindful and watchful of price movements. I will keep monitoring (inflation) item by item,” she said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 10

Retail inflation stays stubbornly above 7%

The Minister expressed the hope that the monsoon would be favourable for the farm sector and result in a good crop, adding that it would also help ensure rural demand remained intact. The government's pointed attack on inflation would, however, need to continue for a while, Ms. Sitharaman stressed.

Edible oil inflation slowed to 9.36%, slipping below double digits for the first time in 27 months, while transport and communication inflation eased to 6.9% in June, from 9.47% in May, reflecting the full impact of the excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel. "Retail inflation has now averaged 7.3% in the first quarter of 2022-23, slightly lower than the RBI's forecast of 7.5%," observed D.K. Srivastava, EY India's chief policy advisor.

"There is not much relief for the low-income consumer budgets with inflation in clothing and footwear at higher levels of 9.2% and 11.9%, respectively, in June. Fuel and light inflation also increased to 10.4% in June as compared to 9.5% in May. Inflationary pressures thus continue unabated due to global supply-side disruptions and consequent pressures on prices of global crude and primary products," he said. The central bank is expected to continue to raise interest rates by about 50 to 60 basis points.

ICRA's chief economist Aditi Nayar said the services sub-indices reflected a pick-up in inflation that needed to be watched very carefully, adding that she, however, expects overall inflation would likely slip back below 7% in the coming months.

‘Banks may log ₹13,000-cr. hit on bonds’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Rising bond yields will force banks to report mark-to-market losses of up to ₹13,000 crore on their investment portfolios in the April-June quarter, according to a report by ICRA.

Profits will moderate for the quarter, but improved loan growth and operating profits will ensure banks' bottom lines remain 'steady' for FY23, ICRA said.

“Despite these expected MTM losses, we expect the net profits of the banks to remain steady, given the expected growth of 11-12% in their core operating profits in FY23, which will more than offset the MTM losses,” ICRA vice-president Anil Gupta said.

Create more jobs, revamp employment policy

The Government's 10 lakh jobs creation plan does not appear to have factored in the ground realities



INDIRA HIRWAY & NEHA SHAH

The Government of India has recently announced its plan to create 10 lakh government jobs in the next 18 months. Of about 40 lakh sanctioned posts, 22% posts are now vacant and the Government will fill these posts in 18 months.

Though the announcement has been called a “historic step in the interest of the youth” and as “raising a new hope and confidence among youth” by some top Government leaders, the plan has serious problems.

Vacancies are much higher

The first question is: how is the Government managing now in the absence of more than a fifth of the required number of staff? There are as many as 8.72 lakh positions that were vacant in various departments of the Central government, as told by the Minister of State in Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Jitendra Singh, to the Rajya Sabha on February 3, 2022. If various positions in public sector banks, the defence forces and police, the health sector, central schools and central universities, and the judiciary are added, then the number touches about 30 lakh posts. This number does not include vacancies in State government jobs. As sanctioned posts

broadly indicate the required posts needed to run a government, it appears that this government is perhaps facing a serious shortage of staff, which is then causing long delays in work, corruption and maybe other inefficiencies.

The Government, however, has not made any complaints about such shortages in recent years. Why then has it made this sudden announcement? Is it because the Government is concerned about youth unemployment? Or is it because it wants to fill the required posts? Or, is it because elections are due in a number of States?

‘Quality’ as issue

Another major concern is about the quality of employment that will be generated through this plan. The share of contract workers in total government employment has been increasing rapidly in recent years – from 11.11 lakh in 2017 to 13.25 lakh in 2020 and to 24.31 lakh in 2021. In addition, there are “honorary workers” such as Anganvadi workers, their helpers, accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers, etc. These employees of the government earn a lower salary (consolidated wages), and are not entitled to “decent work” conditions (International Labour Organization recommendations) including a minimum package of social security.

The Government must ensure that the employment generated under its plan will be of a standard quality. There has been no assurance so far on this by the Government.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

More jobs are needed

The total labour force in the country stands at 437.2 million (April 2022 data). At a labour force participation rate of 42.13% (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd.) the unemployment rate of the youth is about 20% at present. Given the backlog of about 30 million unemployed people and an annual addition of 50 lakh-70 lakh workers every year (World Bank), the dimensions of India's unemployment problem today are formidable. The generation of a mere 10 lakh jobs in the next 18 months is too little. This scheme of the Government will hardly provide any relief to the youth of the country; and will not have much of an impact on the present unemployment problem.

It is important to note here that the performance of the private sector in creating employment opportunities has remained dismal. Currently, when the economy is still struggling to overcome the shocks caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, and when private final consumption expenditure has not crossed the pre-pandemic

level, private firms are being seen to be managing their profit margin by cutting costs (in the form of rationalising wage bills). In this situation it is all the more important for the Government to ensure as many jobs as possible.

Focus on basic needs

As is claimed, if the Government is really in ‘mission mode’ to provide employment to the unemployed, and to the youth, it will have to do much more than what has been announced. To start with, the Government will have to create more employment within the Government. Recent national and international reports and rankings have shown that India is lagging far behind most other countries in terms of health and nutrition, particularly women and children, in education, literacy and skills, holistic care of children in early childhood and later; drinking water and sanitation, and other basic infrastructure, etc.

We believe that the Government will have to take responsibility for meeting these basic needs without depending on privatisation – at least for the bottom 40% of the population. The first task for the Government would be to take much better direct care of basic well-being, human development and human resource development, and the basic infrastructure of the bottom population without privatisation in these areas.

Another major task would also be to reorient the industrialisation policy to focus on labour-intensive sectors of the economy, and promote Micro, Small and Medium

Enterprises (MSMEs) and informal production by ensuring better technology and higher productivity, providing finances (including working capital) and pushing further cluster development for all industries that have the potential.

Urban employment

And, finally, considering the fact that the urban economy has been badly hurt by the pandemic, a carefully designed urban employment guarantee programme would be most desirable to create ample urban employment avenues for urban youth. This programme will have to be different from the rural employment guarantee programme. The urban programme should include: basic urban services, where the youth would get special training so that they can be absorbed in the mainstream economy; day-care centres set up for childcare to enable women to reduce their unpaid services and to ensure quality care for children; and infrastructural gaps filled in under construction work to facilitate quality urban life.

If the gesture of filling vacant posts in the Government is part of a mission employment, it will have to be followed by radical changes in the Government's employment policy. Let us hope that people of India will be able to discern the motives behind the gesture, and assess the Government's performance accordingly.

Indira Hirway is Director and Professor at the Centre for Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad. Neha Shah is Associate Professor at L.J University, Ahmedabad

Impact of inflation on India's poor negligible: Sitharaman

FM cites UNDP report, says govt.'s welfare schemes effective

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The impact of inflation on India's poor would be negligible as per a United Nations Development Programme report on 'Addressing the Cost of Living Crisis in Developing Countries', which also looked at the ripple effects of the Russia-Ukraine war such as energy and food market disruptions.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman cited the UNDP's conclusions in the report to emphasise that India's 'well-tailored' programmes carried out over the past two years to support people and ensure they don't run the risk of slipping into poverty seemed to have



Nirmala Sitharaman

made an impact. While soaring food and energy prices could push up to 71 million people around the world into poverty, the UNDP said in the report that the chances of those in India earning \$1.9 a day slipping into poverty due to this upturn would be

zero, while the impact would be a mere 0.02% and 0.04% if a poverty line of \$3.30 or \$5.50 a day was assumed, respectively.

"A recent comparative assessment of price and income support measures shows that targeted transfers... helps poorer households cope with price spikes," it noted.

The Centre has allocated more than 1,000 lakh tonnes of foodgrains from April 2020 till September this year, over and above the food security quota and had provided support of ₹1,500 to 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders in the first three months of the pandemic, the Minister said.

Industrial output jumps 19.6%

May IIP logs fastest growth in 12 months led by consumer durables, capital goods

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's industrial output grew 19.6% in May, the fastest pace of growth in 12 months, with overall production rising 2.3% from April, and surpassing the pre-pandemic level by 1.7%.

The National Statistical Office (NSO), which released the provisional Index of Industrial Production (IIP) figures on Tuesday, also revised the index for April based on updated data, lowering growth to 6.7% from the 7.1% estimated earlier.

This was the first time in nine months that IIP growth outpaced the growth of core sectors, observed ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar, noting that manufacturing and electricity had led the surge.

Consumer durables pro-



Base buoys: While a favourable base lifted growth, a broad sequential improvement is encouraging, says Sinha. ■ R. RAGU

duction, which had turned positive in April after six months of contraction, zoomed 58.5% in May, followed by capital goods which registered 54.5% growth.

Primary goods, infrastructure/construction items as well as intermediate goods, each clocked about 18%

growth in output. However, growth in consumer non-durables' production slowed sharply to 0.9%.

"While the May growth figures have been pushed up by a favourable base, a sequential improvement across most categories is encouraging," said CARE Ratings chief economist Rajani

Sinha. "Manufacturing continues to show improvement, but the continued weakness in the consumer non-durables segment is concerning," she added.

"Relative to the pre-COVID level of May 2019, the performance was decidedly mixed, with capital goods, consumer durables and consumer non-durables trailing, and primary goods, infrastructure goods and intermediate goods posting a rise in May 2022," ICRA's Ms. Nayar pointed out.

The rating agency expects IIP growth to moderate to a range of 11%-13% in June, before slipping back to single digit growth in the second quarter, as the base effect of impaired output from the deadly second COVID-19 wave last year dissipates.



An image of the Southern Ring Nebula from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope. ■ REUTERS/NASA

NASA telescope dives deep into the universe

James Webb telescope captures images

**REUTERS
GREENBELT**

NASA on Tuesday unveiled images from the James Webb Space Telescope, the largest and most powerful orbital observatory ever launched.

The pictures, designed to peer farther than before with greater clarity to the dawn of the universe, were hailed by NASA as milestone marking a new era of astronomical exploration.

Nearly two decades in the making, the \$9 billion infrared telescope was launched on December 25, 2021. It reached its destination in solar orbit nearly 1 million miles from Earth a month later.

The crowning debut im-

age, previewed on Monday by U.S. President Biden at the White House but displayed with greater fanfare on Tuesday, was a “deep field” photo of a distant galaxy cluster, SMACS 0723, revealing the most detailed glimpse of the early universe recorded to date.

Among the other Webb subjects were two enormous clouds of gas and dust blasted into space by stellar explosions to form incubators for new stars – the Carina Nebula and the Southern Ring Nebula, each thousands of light years away from Earth. The collection also included fresh images of another galaxy cluster known as Stephan’s Quintet, first discovered in 1877.

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.