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News Analysis (19 Mar, 2020)

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COVID-19 and Global Unemployment

Why in News

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** has recently said that the **COVID-19 pandemic** will drastically increase global unemployment, leaving up to 25 million more people out of work and slashing incomes.

COVID-19 is not only a **global health crisis** but also a major **labour market and economic crisis** that is having a huge impact on people.

Key Points

- The **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, has warned that the economic and labour crisis sparked by the coronavirus will have far-reaching impacts on labour market outcomes.
- The **ILO** said that by comparison, the global financial crisis of 2008-09 increased global unemployment by 22 million.

- **Major Findings:**

- A study based on the report suggests that the world should prepare to see a **significant rise in unemployment and underemployment** in the wake of the pandemic.
 - In the best-case scenario, 5.3 million more people will be pushed into unemployment.
 - In the worst case scenario, 24.7 million more will become jobless, on top of the 188 million registered as unemployed in 2019.
- **Underemployment** is also expected to increase on a large scale, as the economic consequences of the virus outbreak translate into reductions in working hours and wages.
- **Self-employment in developing countries** usually serves to **cushion the impact of economic shifts** but this time due to the severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods, it might not help
- **Reductions in access to work** will also mean large **income losses** for workers. The study estimates the income loss between \$860 billion and \$3.4 trillion by the end of 2020, which will translate into falls in consumption of goods and services, in turn affecting the prospects for businesses and economies.
- The **number of people who live in poverty** despite holding one or more jobs will also **increase significantly**.
 - The strain on incomes resulting from the decline in economic activity will devastate workers close to or below the poverty line.
- **Some groups will be disproportionately impacted** by the jobs crisis, including youth, older workers, women and migrants which will only increase the already prevailing inequality.

- **Suggestions:**

- The ILO has called for **urgent, large-scale and coordinated measures** to protect workers in the workplace and stimulate the economy, employment and job support through social protections, paid leave and other subsidies.
- It is suggested to **tackle this pandemic in the same way the global financial crisis of 2008 was tackled**, by presenting a united front to address the consequences.

Source: TH

Supreme Court Invoked Special Powers to Remove a Minister

Why in News

Recently, the Supreme Court invoked its special powers under **Article 142** of the

Constitution to remove a Manipur minister.

Key Points

- The Supreme Court removed Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh, from the state cabinet and restrained him “from entering the Legislative Assembly till further orders”.
- A **disqualification petition against the minister was pending before the Speaker** since 2017 but the Speaker failed to take the decision within a reasonable time period.
- The Speaker also failed to take any decision within the stipulated time period of 4 weeks as provided by **the Supreme Court in the 21st January, 2020 order.**
- **Article 212** of the Constitution **bars courts from inquiring into proceedings of the Legislature.** In this case, however, prompted by the fact that the Speaker’s conduct has been called into question on several occasions, the Court said it was “constrained” to invoke the court’s extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution.
- Earlier, the **Manipur High Court, in this matter, had found grounds for disqualification under the Tenth Schedule** but stopped short of issuing directions. The reason being that question of whether a High Court can direct a Speaker to decide on a disqualification petition within a time frame is pending before a Supreme Court Bench.

Highlights of 21st January 2020 Order

- The court in general said that **“the Speaker, in acting as a Tribunal under the Tenth Schedule,** is bound to decide disqualification petitions within a reasonable period”, which “will depend on the facts of each case.”
- The Supreme Court also held that disqualification petitions under the tenth schedule should be **adjudicated by a mechanism outside Parliament or Legislative Assemblies.**
- The Court has suggested a **permanent tribunal headed by a retired Supreme Court judge or a former High Court Chief Justice** as a new mechanism. However, this would require an amendment to the Constitution. Currently, disqualification of members of a House/Assembly is referred to the Speaker of the House/Assembly.
- Rationale behind Court’s suggestion was to **ensure that such disputes are decided both swiftly and impartially,** thus giving real teeth to the provisions contained in the Tenth Schedule.

Disqualification under the Tenth Schedule

- The Anti-Defection Law was passed in 1985 through the **52nd amendment to the Constitution. It added the Tenth Schedule** to the Indian Constitution. The main intent of the law was to combat “the evil of political defections”.

- According to it, **a member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified for being a member of the House**, if
 - he **voluntarily gives up** his membership of such political party; or
 - he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days.

Exceptions to the disqualification on the ground of defection (Two cases)

- If a member goes out of his party as a result of a merger of the party with another party. A merger takes place when two-thirds of the members of the party have agreed to such merger.
- If a member, after being elected as the presiding officer of the House, voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office. This exemption has been provided in view of the dignity and impartiality of the office.

Powers of Speaker with regard to Anti-Defection Law

- Any question regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be **decided by the presiding officer of the House**.
- After the **Kihoto Hollohan case (1993)**, the Supreme Court declared that the **decision of the presiding officer is not final** and can be questioned in any court. It is **subject to judicial review** on the grounds of malafide, perversity, etc.

Article 142

It provides **discretionary power to the Supreme Court** as it states that the Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for **doing complete justice** in any cause or matter pending before it.

Source: IE

Open Market Operations

Why in News

Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to infuse Rs.10,000 crore liquidity in the banking system by buying government securities through Open Market Operations (OMO).

- The financial markets have been facing heightened volatility due to the spread of the **COVID-19**.

- RBI had earlier infused **Rs. 25,000 crore** of liquidity through **Long-Term Repo Operations (LTRO)**.

Key Points

- **Open Market Operations (OMOs)** are market operations conducted by RBI by way of **sale/purchase of government securities to/from the market** with an objective to **adjust the rupee liquidity conditions** in the market on a durable basis.
- If there is excess liquidity, RBI resorts to sale of securities and sucks out the rupee liquidity.
- Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, RBI buys securities from the market, thereby releasing liquidity into the market.
- It is one of the **quantitative (to regulate or control the total volume of money) monetary policy tools** which is employed by the central bank of a country to control the money supply in the economy.

Long-term Repo Operations

- Under **LTRO**, RBI will conduct term repos of one-year and three-year tenors of appropriate sizes for up to a total amount of Rs 1 lakh crore at the prevailing **repo rate**.
- As banks get long-term funds at lower rates, their cost of funds falls. In turn, they reduce interest rates for borrowers.
- LTRO helps RBI to ensure that banks reduce their marginal cost of funds-based lending rate, without reducing policy rates.

Objectives of LTRO

- To assure banks about the availability of durable liquidity at reasonable cost relative to prevailing market conditions.
- Further encourage banks to undertake maturity transformation smoothly and seamlessly so as to augment credit flows to productive sectors.

Maturity transformation is when banks take short-term sources of finance, such as deposits from savers, and turn them into long-term borrowings, such as mortgages.

Source: TH

New Regulatory Bodies to Cover Traditional Medicines

Why in News

Recently, the Rajya Sabha passed the **National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine (NCIM) Bill, 2019** and **the National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2019** for setting up separate commissions for Indian traditional systems of medicine and homoeopathy respectively.

- The **National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine (NCIM) Bill, 2019** seeks to replace the existing regulator Central Council for Indian Medicine (CCIM) with a new body to ensure transparency.
- Whereas, the National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2019, aims to replace the Central Council for Homeopathy, which is the current regulatory body for homeopathy.

Key Points

- **Overall Objectives:**
 - The two legislations aim to ensure **availability of quality medical professionals of Indian systems of medicine and homeopathy**.
 - The Bills also intend to adopt and integrate the latest research with the traditional medicines.
- **Loopholes:**
 - **Exclusion of yoga and naturopathy** from the ambit of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine.
 - **Absence of an appellate tribunal** for both the commissions.
 - **Lack of integration of modern and traditional** medical education.

Source: IE

National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine (NCIM) Bill, 2019

Why in News

Recently, the Rajya Sabha passed the National Commission for **Indian Systems of Medicines** (NCIM) Bill, 2019.

Key Features of the Bill

- **Constitution of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine:**
The NCISM will consist of 29 members, appointed by the central government.

- **Functions of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine:**
 - Framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals of Indian System of Medicine.
 - Ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of Indian System of Medicine to the regulations made under the Bill.
 - Ensuring coordination among the autonomous boards set up under the Bill.
- **Constitution of Autonomous Boards:**
 - **Board of Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Sowa-Rigpa** responsible for formulating standards, curriculum, guidelines for setting up of medical institutions, and granting recognition to medical qualifications at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in their respective disciplines.
 - **Board of assessment and rating** to assess as well as to grant permission to educational institutions of Indian systems of medicine.
 - **Board of ethics and registration of practitioners of Indian systems of medicine** to maintain a National Register and deal with ethical issues.
- **Entrance Exams:**
 - In order to ensure transparency it also proposes a **common entrance exam and an exit exam** that all graduates will have **to clear to obtain their license to practice Indian medicine**.
 - Further, a **teacher's eligibility test** has been proposed in the Bill **to assess the standard of teachers before appointment and promotions**.
- **Advisory Council for Indian System of Medicine:**
 - The Advisory Council for Indian System of Medicine will be the **primary platform through which the states/union territories can put forth their views** and concerns before the NCISM.
 - Further, the Council will advise the NCISM on measures to determine and maintain the minimum standards of medical education.

National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2019

Why in News

Recently, the Rajya Sabha passed National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2019 to develop and streamline the usage of homeopathy in the country.

Key Features of the Bill

- **Constitution of the National Commission for Homeopathy:**
 - The Bill seeks to **repeal the Homeopathy Central Council Act, 1973** and aims to provide availability of adequate and high quality homeopathic medical professionals.
 - The Bill sets up the **National Commission for Homeopathy (NCH)**, which will consist of 20 members, appointed by the central government.
- **Functions of the National Commission for Homeopathy:**
 - Framing policies for regulating medical institutions and homeopathic medical professionals.
 - Assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure.
 - Ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of Homeopathy of the regulations made under the Bill.
 - Ensuring coordination among the autonomous boards set up under the Bill.
- **Autonomous boards:**
 - **Homeopathy Education Board:** It will be responsible for formulating standards, curriculum, guidelines for setting up of medical institutions, and granting recognition to medical qualifications at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels respectively.
 - **Medical Assessment and Rating Board for Homeopathy:** It determines the process of rating and assessment of medical institutions and has the power to levy monetary penalties on institutions which fail to maintain the minimum standards. It will also grant permission for establishing a new medical institution.
 - **Board of Ethics and Medical Registration for Homeopathy:** It will maintain a National Register of all licensed homeopathic medical practitioners, and regulate their professional conduct. Only those medical practitioners included in the Register will be allowed to practice homeopathic medicine.
- **Advisory Council for Homeopathy:**
 - The Council will be the primary platform through which the states/union territories can put forth their views and concerns before the NCH.
 - Further, the Council will advise the NCH on measures to determine and maintain minimum standards of medical education.
- **Entrance examinations:**
 - There will be a uniform National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test and an exit test for under-graduate homeopathy education in all medical institutions regulated by the Bill.
 - The Bill also proposes a National Teachers' Eligibility Test for postgraduates of homeopathy who wish to take up teaching homeopathy as a profession.

- **Appeal on matters related to professional and ethical misconduct:**

If the medical practitioner is aggrieved by the decision of the Board of Ethics and Medical Registration for Homoeopathy, he can approach the NCH to appeal against the decision. Appeal of the decision of the NCH lies with the central government.

Homeopathy

- The word 'Homeopathy' is derived from two Greek words, Homois meaning similar and pathos meaning suffering. It was introduced in India in the 18th Century.
- It takes a holistic approach towards the sick individual through promotion of inner balance at mental, emotional, spiritual and physical levels.

APEDA signs MoU with SFAC

Why in News

Recently, the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)** has signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC)** to bring in better synergy in the agricultural activities.

Key Points

- APEDA has been in dialog with SFAC for **linking of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), farmers' cooperatives to the export value chain** through quality production as per the requirement of importing countries.
- **Agri Export Policy** announced by Government of India with **Farmers' Centric Approach** suggests for developing product specific clusters in the country to help improve productivity and quality of the varieties of crops with special involvement of FPOs.

FPOs are an **institutional innovation** to help small holders to reduce cost of produce by procuring necessary inputs in bulk at wholesale rates, aggregation of produce and bulk transport reducing marketing cost etc. and extend their reach to modern technology and distant markets.
- The Policy also aims at **addressing the obstacles faced by FPOs** through organisations like SFAC to expand its network.
- The **joint collaboration** will enable SFAC and APEDA to reach a large farmer base for improving the production base of agri products **quantitatively and qualitatively**.

It will maintain the consistency of supply and establish an image of quality suppliers in the International market leading to increase in export volume and value, contributing indirectly to doubling of farmers' income.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority

- It is an **authority established under an act of Parliament** and under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, Government of India.
- It has been mandated with the **responsibility of export promotion and development of the scheduled products** viz. fruits, vegetables, meat products, dairy products, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages etc.
- APEDA has also been entrusted with the **responsibility to monitor import of sugar**.

Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium

- It is an **autonomous society promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare**.
- It is a pioneer in **organising small and marginal farmers** as Farmers Interest Groups, Farmers Producers Organisation (FPOs) and Farmers Producers Company for endowing them with bargaining power and economies of scale.
- It provides a **platform for increased accessibility and cheaper availability of agricultural inputs** to small and marginal farmers and in establishing forward and backward linkages in supply chain management.

Source: PIB

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has informed about the implementation of the **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)** in the country.

Key Points

- Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana is the scheme of the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- It was launched in **2017**.
- It is a **central sector scheme** funded from the **Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund**. The fund was notified in the year 2016.
 - All unclaimed amounts from small savings accounts, PPF and EPF are transferred to this fund.

- It aims to provide **aids and assistive living devices to senior citizens belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category** who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities.
The aids and assistive devices, viz walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/crutches, tripods/quad pods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures and spectacles are provided to eligible beneficiaries.
- The scheme is being implemented by **Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO)**, which is a **public sector undertaking** under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Source:PIB

Procurement of Indigenous Tejas Fighter Aircraft

Why in News

Recently, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved procurement of 83 of the more **advanced Mk1A version of the Tejas aircraft**.

Key Points

- The procurement will be a major **boost to 'Make in India'** as the aircraft is indigenously designed, developed and manufactured.
- The DAC has also approved an amendment to the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016.
- This will bring about more **transparency in costs and compress the timelines** for negotiation of the contract.

Tejas

- Tejas is a **Light Combat Aircraft**.
- It is **indigenously-designed** by Aircraft Development Agency (ADA) under the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and **manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)**.

Defence Acquisition Council

- DAC is the **highest decision-making body** in the Defence Ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the **three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard**.
- The **Minister of Defence** is the **Chairman** of the Council.

- It was formed, after the Group of Ministers **recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System'**, in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

Source: PIB

UN Security Council

Why in News

Recently, China has taken over as president of the UN Security Council for the month of March 2020.

Key points

- The **Security Council** was established by the **UN Charter in 1945**. It is **one of the six principal organs of the United Nations**.
The other **5 organs of the United Nations** are—the **General Assembly, the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat**.
- Its primary responsibility is **to work to maintain international peace and security**.
- The council has **15 members: the five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members** elected for two-year terms.
The **five permanent members** are the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom.
- **Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions** of the Security Council on matters are made by an **affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members. A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution**.
- Any member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected.
- The council's **presidency is a capacity that rotates every month** among its 15 members.
- The council is headquartered at **NewYork**.

Source

Real-time Train Information System

Why in News

The Real-time Train Information system is being installed in locomotives to enable better tracking of train movement.

- The RTIS Project is being executed by the **Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS)** in collaboration with the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- RTIS is an **example of 'Make In India'** as it has been entirely designed, developed and manufactured within the country.

Benefits of RTIS

- RTIS enables **automatic acquisition of train movement timings** at the stations, including that of arrival & departure or run-through.
- It also helps in **automatic plotting of control charts** in ICT based Control Office Application (COA) on all divisions of Indian Railways.
- It also enables the train controllers to track the location and speed of locomotives/trains more closely, without any manual intervention, which helps in **improving the efficiency of train control**.
Further, it is extremely handy for **emergency messaging** from locomotive to control centre, helping in **faster response in case of any breakdown or disaster**.
- The real time data of RTIS is also linked with the **National Train Enquiry System (NTES)**. Thus, more accurate train running information is being passed to the passengers, which helps them to conveniently plan their arrival at the stations.

Centre for Railway Information Systems

- The Ministry of Railways set up CRIS as a Society in July 1986. It is the **Information Technology (IT) wing of Indian Railways**.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi**.
- It performs the functions of Indian Railways such as passenger ticketing, freight operations, train dispatching and control, crew management, e-procurement, etc.
NTES was developed by the CRIS.

Source: PIB
