

Current Affairs of the Day

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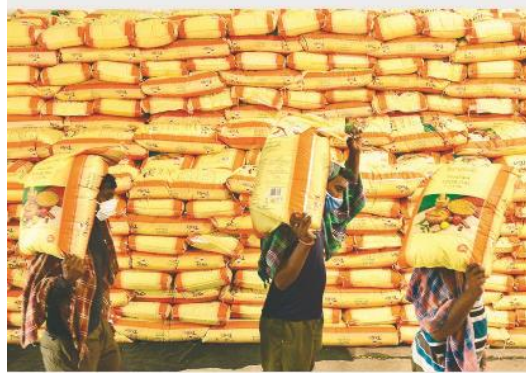
PAPER 3:

➤ Economy:

1. Slight rise in India's fish production

Free foodgrain scheme till Nov.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced that the free grain distribution scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana



Daily necessities: Workers unloading sacks of toor dal at a warehouse near Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

Timely decisions of lockdown and distribution of free grains by both the government and civil society outfits ensured that our poor did not suffer hunger. Population twice that of the European Union, 12 times the population of the U.K. and two-and-a-half times the population of the United States was provided free grains by the government

NARENDRA MODI,
PRIME MINISTER



(PMGKAY) will be extended by five months till the end of November, with an additional estimated outlay of ₹90,000 crore.

Additional information

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana:

- PMGKAY is a part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.
- It was announced for a three month period (April, May and June), covering 80 crore ration cardholders. It will come to an end on 30th June 2020.
- The scheme aimed at providing each person who is covered under the National Food Security Act with an additional 5 kg grains (wheat or rice) for free, in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrain already provided through the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- The beneficiaries are also entitled to 1 kg of pulse for free, according to regional preferences.

Performance of the Scheme:

- According to the Union Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, a total of 116.02 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of food grains have been lifted under the scheme.



- In April, 93% of the food grains were distributed targeting 74.05 crore beneficiaries.
- In May, the distribution stood at 91% reaching 72.99 crore beneficiaries
- In June 2020, 71% of allocated food grains have been distributed to 56.81 crore beneficiaries so far.

Slight rise in India's fish production

Key Points:

- India's marine fish production registered a marginal increase of 2.1% in 2019 compared to the previous year.
- The country recorded 3.56 million tonnes in total landings during the year, according to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.
- The figures released here on Tuesday showed that Tamil Nadu took the first position in landings with 7.75 lakh tonnes. It was followed by Gujarat (7.49 lakh tonnes) and Kerala (5.44 lakh tonnes).

Criminal law reform consultation soon

Key Points:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has constituted a national level committee for reform in criminal law.
- The committee, which has several leading legal academicians on board, would be gathering opinions online, consulting with experts and collating material for their report to the government.
- The consultation exercise would start on July 4 and go on for the next three months.

Centre to focus on online education

Key Points:

- With the social inequity in online education coming to the fore due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre has proposed long-term measures to bridge



the divide, including plans to distribute laptops or tablets to 40% of all college and university students over the next five years, and to equip all government schools with information and communication technology (ICT).

- In a presentation to the Finance Commission on Monday, the School Education Department also estimated it would need to spend upto ₹1 lakh per school for sanitisation and quarantine measures in preparation for the safe reopening of schools that have been shut due to the pandemic.

Basic measures:

- The measures would include ensuring basic water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, safe drinking water, availability of alcohol rub/sanitiser, disinfectant, cleaning material and equipment for temperature checking.
- Funds for these measures are being provided under the composite grant for schools, ranging between ₹25,000 for small schools with less than 100 students and ₹1 lakh for schools with over a thousand students, according to the presentation to the Commission.
- In order for government schools to be reopened, funds will also be provided for awareness and community mobilisation to sensitise parents, students and local leaders, as well as a sum of ₹1,000 per teacher to encourage them to function as first-level counsellors, disseminate basic information about COVID-19 and provide digital/online/mobile education.
- For the 3.1 lakh government schools above upper primary level who do not have ICT facilities, the Centre proposes a budget of ₹55,840 crore to equip them with such facilities.

Urgent matter:

- For college and university students, the promotion of online education, which has become more urgent due to the pandemic, will be twofold. On the one hand, the Human Resource Development Ministry proposes to spend ₹2,306 crore on developing and translating digital course content and resources over the next five years.
- On the other, it intends to provide laptops and tablets to 4.06 crore students — that is, 40% of the projected student population — by 2026, at a total cost of ₹60,900 crore. The largest chunk of 1.5 crore students are to receive devices



in the next financial year 2021-22. An average cost of ₹15,000 has been assumed per device.

- The Centre and States are to share the cost of making devices available, in a 60:40 ratio, according to the presentation to the Finance Commission.

46 million girls went missing in India

UNFPA's State of the World Population 2020 report

Key findings:

- One in three girls missing globally due to sex selection, both pre- and post-natal, is from India — 46 million out of the total 142 million, according to the UNFPA's State of the World Population 2020 report released on Tuesday.

Missing girls

An estimated one in nine deaths of girls below the age of 5 in India, the highest among all countries, may be attributed to postnatal sex selection. The table shows estimates of excess female mortality (EFM) below age 5 and its share of overall mortality rates in 2012

Excess female mortality rates are calculated as the difference between observed and expected mortality rates for girls below age 5

| Country | EFM below 5 years | EFM as a % of overall female under-5 mortality |
|-------------|-------------------|--|
| India | 13.5 | 11.7% |
| Bahrain | 1.1 | 5.9% |
| Egypt | 2.4 | 5.6% |
| Iran | 1.8 | 5.2% |
| Jordan | 1.9 | 5.0% |
| Nepal | 2.9 | 3.5% |
| China | 1 | 3.3% |
| Afghanistan | 5.2 | 2.7% |
| Pakistan | 4.7 | 2.7% |
| Bangladesh | 2.1 | 2.6% |

- The figure shows that the number of missing women has more than doubled over the past 50 years, who were at 61 million in 1970.
- The report examines the issue of missing women by studying sex ratio imbalances at birth as a result of gender-biased sex selection as well as excess female mortality due to deliberate neglect of girls because of a culture of son preference. Excess female mortality is the difference between observed and expected mortality of the girl child or avoidable death of girls during childhood.
- The report cites a 2014 study to state that India has the highest rate of excess female deaths at 13.5 per 1,000 female births or one in nine deaths of females below the age of 5 due to postnatal sex selection. The same study shows that in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan excess female mortality of girls below 5 years of age was under 3%.



- However, the advent of technology and increased access to ultrasound imaging ensured that parents didn't have to wait for the birth of their girl child to kill her but could terminate a foetus upon knowing its gender. This resulted in the number of girls missing due to female foeticide exceeding those that were missing because of postnatal sex selection.
- According to estimates averaged over a five year period (2013-17), annually, there were 1.2 million missing female births, at a global level. India had about 4,60,000 girls 'missing' at birth each year.
- These skewed numbers translate into long-term shifts in the proportions of women and men in the population of some countries, the report points out.
- In many countries, this results in a "marriage squeeze" as prospective grooms far outnumber prospective brides, which further results in human trafficking for marriage as well as child marriages.

India, Sri Lanka hold talks over debt

Key Points:

- India is holding "close and constructive" discussions with Sri Lanka, on Colombo's pending requests for rescheduling its debt repayment and for currency swap facilities under bilateral and SAARC arrangements.
- Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa had sought a moratorium on the debt owed by Colombo — totalling \$960 million — during his New Delhi visit in February this year.

Economy under strain:

- Sri Lanka's mounting external debt was a concern even before the coronavirus pandemic, but its impact has aggravated the strain on the island's nation's economy that is saddled with loans — bilateral, multilateral and in the international money market — amounting to billions of dollars.
- This year alone, Sri Lanka is scheduled to repay \$2.9 billion of its debt, which Colombo is reportedly trying to reschedule with bilateral partners. It is unclear how Sri Lanka will repay the apparently non-negotiable \$1 billion international sovereign bond maturing this October.



- Sri Lanka is in talks with the IMF, from whom it sought a rapid financing instrument in April.
- Following the global pandemic, Beijing has pledged a loan of \$500 million to help Colombo deal with its immediate impact. Sri Lanka already owes China about \$5 billion.
- Further, upon Sri Lanka's request, the China Development Bank (CDB) on Tuesday entered into a \$140 million-facility agreement with the Bank of Ceylon, drawn under two tranches of \$70 million each to help the State-owned bank cope amid the pandemic.