

RICE INSECURITY: THE DEPLETION OF GROUNDWATER RESOURCES AND THE INCREASING COST OF CULTIVATION MAY PUT RICE PRODUCTION IN JEOPARDY IN THE FUTURE

Context

- India recently banned the exports of **broken rice** and imposed a 20 per cent duty on the exports of various grades of rice amid high cereal inflation and uncertainties with respect to domestic supply.
- This decision to curb rice exports has, unfortunately, been taken when global food prices are already rising and have heightened food security anxieties across the global market as many developing countries depend on Indian rice.

Statistics

- **Production:** Rice is India's largest agricultural crop accounting for over 40% of the total foodgrain output.
- **Consumption:** India, the world's biggest rice consumer after China
- **Export valuation:** India is also being the world's biggest exporter as a record 212.10 lakh metric tonnes (LMT)/ 21.21 mt valued at \$9.66 billion got shipped out during the fiscal ending March 2022.
- **Global trade share:** India exports rice to more than 130 countries, constituting around 40 per cent of the global rice trade.

About Broken Rice

- Broken rice is fragments of rice grains, broken in the field, during drying, during transport, or during milling. Mechanical separators are used to separate the broken grains from the whole grains and sort them by size.
- Broken rice is fragmented, not defective hence there is nothing wrong with it.

Reasons for recent rice ban

- **Price rise:** As per Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the price of rice which was around Rs 15-16 per kg as on 1st January 2022 has increased to Rs 22 per kg in September 2022.
- **Rise in export share:** As per government, the broken rice exports have increased 42 times to 21.31 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) during April-August 2022 as compared to 0.51 LMT during the corresponding period of 2019, which is absolutely abnormal.
 - Also the broken rice export figure for the full financial year shows an increase of more than 300 per cent from 12.21 lakh metric tonnes in 2018-19 to 38.90 LMT in 2021-22.
- **China-the top buyer:** China has emerged as the top buyer of Indian rice during the pandemic, importing 16.34 LMT or 7.7 per cent of India's total rice export of 212.10 LMT in 2021-22.
 - Out of this total rice import by China from India nearly 97 per cent, or 15.76 LMT, was broken rice.
- **Falling realisation:** The per tonne realisation from rice exports declined 11 per cent from \$402 in 2018-19 to \$359 during the April-July period of the current fiscal (2022-23).
- **Decreased harvest:** The total rice sowing during the 2022 kharif season has been so far about 20 lakh hectare less as compared to the corresponding figure of the last year, which may lead to fall in rice production by 10 million tonnes and rise in rice prices.
 - The primary reason for the decline in the sown area could be attributed to the slow advancement of the monsoon in the month of June and its uneven spread in July in some growing key regions in the country.
- **Policy exigency:** Though the stocks for rice was comfortable, but given the political pressure to continue the free-food grain scheme under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana beyond September has convinced the export ban.
- **Paucity in Domestic Market:** The demand for broken rice has increased within the country of late for poultry feed or for ethanol for which broken rice or damaged foodgrains are being used.

NATIONAL LOK ADALAT

National Lok Adalat will be held on 12 November across the country to dispose off pending cases through settlement.



About:

- **What is it?** Lok Adalat is one of the alternative dispute redressal mechanisms, it is a forum where disputes/cases pending in the court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled/compromised amicably.
 - **Who conducts?** National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA) along with other Legal Services Institutions conducts Lok Adalats.
 - **Status:** Lok Adalats have been given **statutory status** under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
 - **Appeal:**
 - The award (decision) made by the Lok Adalats is deemed to be a decree of a civil court and is **final and binding on all parties and no appeal against such an award lies before any court of law.**
 - If the parties are not satisfied with the award of the Lok Adalat though there is no provision for an appeal against such an award, but they are free to initiate litigation by approaching the court of appropriate jurisdiction by filing a case by following the required procedure, in exercise of their right to litigate.
 - **Fees:** There is no court fee payable when a matter is filed in a Lok Adalat.
 - **Nature of Cases to be Referred to Lok Adalat**
 1. Any case pending before any court.
 2. Any dispute which has not been brought before any court and is likely to be filed before the court.
- Provided that any matter relating to an **offence not compoundable under the law shall not be settled in Lok Adalat.**

NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE 2022

The 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature is awarded to the French author Annie Ernaux.



About:

- Ernaux, was honoured “for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory”.
- Her more than 20 books, many of which have been school texts in France for decades, offer one of the most subtle, insightful windows into the social life of modern France.
- Personal experiences are the source for all of Ms. Ernaux’s work and she is the pioneer of France’s “autofiction” genre, which gives narrative form to real-life experience.

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates Competition Commission of India’s Regional Office (West) in Mumbai.



About:

- **Status:** A statutory body established under the provisions of The Competition Act, 2002.
- **Established in:** 2003.
- **Composition:** A Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Preceding agency:** Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission.
- **Mandate:** To implement provisions of The Competition Act, 2002 which –
 - prohibits anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position by enterprises
 - regulates mergers and acquisition (M&A) which can have an adverse effect on competition within India. Thus, deals beyond a certain threshold are required to get clearance from CCI.

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE’S FIFTH ASSEMBLY

International Solar Alliance’s Fifth Assembly to be held in New Delhi from 17th to 20th October, 2022



About:

- The Assembly is the **apex decision-making body of ISA**, in which each Member Country is represented. This body makes **decisions concerning the implementation of the ISA's Framework Agreement** and coordinated actions to be taken to achieve its objective.
- **India holds the office of the President of the ISA Assembly.** Ministers, missions and delegates from 109 Member and Signatory Countries are set to participate in this meeting.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- It is an **international organisation** with 109 member and signatory countries.
- It works with governments to **improve energy access and security worldwide** and promote solar power as a sustainable way to transition to a carbon-neutral future.
- ISA's mission is to unlock **US\$ 1 trillion of investments in solar by 2030** while reducing the cost of the technology and its financing.
- With the signing and ratification of the ISA Framework Agreement by 15 countries in 2017, **ISA became the first international intergovernmental organization to be headquartered in India.**

VYOMMITRA

ISRO's humanoid Vyommitra's skills get a lift-off with digital grey matter.



About:

- 'Vyommitra', is a **humanoid designed and developed by the ISRO** to fly aboard unmanned test missions ahead of the Gaganyaan human space-flight mission, is undergoing pre-flight ground tests.

- ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU) has successfully **integrated it with a computer 'brain'** which enables it to 'read' control panels aboard the unmanned test flights and communicate with the ISRO ground stations.
- The AI-enabled robot, which can withstand vibrations and shock during the flight, has been designed to **resemble a human with facial expressions and speech and sight capabilities**. It is a **half-humanoid lacking lower limbs**.

ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT SCHEME (ODOP)

PM Modi calls for giving boost to One District One Product scheme & further develop Aspirational Districts.



About:

- ODOP was launched by the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries**, to help districts reach their full potential, foster economic and socio-cultural growth, and create employment opportunities, especially, in rural areas.
- This initiative is carried out with the '**Districts as Exports Hub**' initiative by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Commerce.
- There may be **more than one cluster of ODOP products in one district**. The States would **identify the food product** for a district, keeping in perspective the focus of the scheme on perishables.
- The ODOP product could be a **perishable Agri produce, cereal-based product, or a food product** widely produced in a district and their allied sectors.
- The ODOP launch date is January 24, 2018, by the Uttar Pradesh Government, and due to its success, was later adopted by the Central Government.

Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)

- Launched by the Hon'ble PM in January 2018, it aims to quickly and effectively transform 112 most under-developed districts across the country.

- The ranking is based on the incremental progress made across 49 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) **under 5 broad socio-economic themes** - Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development and Infrastructure.
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IS IT TIME FOR THE GIG ECONOMY?

In News:

- Moonlighting — or employees working for remuneration with entities other than their employers — has been a hot topic in recent months.
 - In September 2022, Wipro fired 300 employees over allegations of moonlighting.
 - Earlier, Infosys had sent a reminder mail to its employees that moonlighting is in violation of the employee code of conduct.

Moonlighting in India

- During the pandemic, those with desk jobs had more time on their hands and thus it was easier to take on a few projects outside of work.
- In July, Kotak Securities said in a study that at least 60% of 400 employees surveyed said they themselves had, or knew someone who had engaged in moonlighting.

Laws regulating moonlighting in India

- Moonlighting is not defined in any of the statutes in India and so far, no Constitutional Court has rendered a decision on the subject.
- However, there are enactments that deal with double employment.
 - **Section 60 of the Factories Act** deals with restriction on double employment.
 - This enactment is applicable only to employees working in factories.
 - There are State enactments which deal with employment of persons working in offices, banks, shops, etc.
- Currently, moonlighting is subject to law of the land. The sphere of employment, however, cannot be extended by the employer beyond working hours and outside his place of employment.

- Supreme court in Glaxo Laboratories (India) Limited vs Labour Court, Meerut and others had observed that:
 - If the power to regulate the behaviour of the workmen outside the duty hours and at any place was conferred upon the employer, contract of service may be reduced to contract of slavery.
- This case was not specifically about moonlighting but the court's observation gives an idea as to how the law may view such cases.

Does the law lay out punitive action against moonlighting?

- The Courts of law in India dealing with employment are Writ Courts and Labour Courts. These Courts exercise jurisdiction based on equity or fairness.
- Therefore, the Courts may lean in favour of the employee unless the contravention (act of violation) of the employee has led to serious prejudice and loss to the employer.
- In other words, unless an employer is able to prove that an employee acted against the interest of the company, Courts may not uphold severe punishment of termination of employment.

How are companies and experts reacting to moonlighting?

- In August 2022, Wipro chairman, in a tweet, termed moonlighting as cheating.
- Later, in September 2022, company fired 300 employees for moonlighting.
- Infosys has warned staff against moonlighting, saying it could lead to termination.
- However, there are companies which favour a moonlighting policy that allows employees to pursue their passion for economic interests alongside their full-time employment.
- Experts, too, believe that in today's world, every company ought to have a gig economy strategy. Not having one is like missing the Internet revolution of 1990 or the mobile revolution in 2010.
- Gig economy is a labour market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.