

THE GENDER PAY GAP, HARD TRUTHS AND ACTIONS NEEDED

Context

- India holds significant position with regards to the global economic growth and structural transformation story. But the asymmetries are still abound (exist in large numbers) in the country's labour market.
- A commensurate improvement in its labour market outcomes and a fair distribution of the fruits of economic progress will spur further economic growth and the benefits it brings.

Background

- The **Third International Equal Pay Day 2022** was observed on 18 September
- The symbolic day aims at highlighting issues and raising worldwide awareness to put an end to the history of gender discrimination that women are generally subjected to by getting paid less than their male counterparts.

Impact of the pandemic

- While the full impact of the pandemic is yet to be known, it is clear that its impact has been uneven, with **women being among the worst affected** in terms of their **income security**.
 - This is partly due to their representation in **sectors hard hit** by COVID-19, combined with the **gendered division** of family responsibilities.
 - Many women reverted to full-time care of children and the elderly during the pandemic, foregoing their livelihoods to do so.

Discrimination as factor

- Globally, women on average, are paid about 20 per cent less than men. Though the gender pay gap is **vastly** attributed **purely** to **discrimination** based on one's gender or sex, though **individual characteristics** such as education, skills or experience also play a part.
- The **Gender-based discriminatory practices** include the following:
 - **Lower wages** paid to women for work of equal value
 - **Undervaluation** of women's work in highly feminised occupations and enterprises,
 - **Motherhood pay gap**, i.e. lower wages for mothers compared to non-mothers.

Indian strategy

- **Legislative actions:** To close the gender pay gap, especially at the low-end of the wage distribution, India was one of the pioneering countries to enact the **Minimum Wages Act in 1948** followed by adoption of the **Equal Remuneration Act in 1976**.
 - In **2019**, India carried out comprehensive reforms in both the above legislations and enacted the **Code on Wages**.
- **Policy initiatives:** As per evidence, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**) in 2005 benefited rural women workers and helped reduce the gender pay gap, both directly and indirectly.
 - **Directly** by raising the pay levels of women workers who participated in the programme
 - **Indirectly** benefits accrued to women involved in agricultural occupations through higher earnings, as MGNREGA contributed to the rapid rise in overall rural and agricultural wages in the country.
- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act:** In **2017**, the Government amended the **Maternity Benefit Act of 1961**, which increased the ‘maternity leave with pay protection’ from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for first two children for all women working in establishments employing 10 or more workers.
 - This is expected to **reduce the motherhood pay gap** among mothers in the median and high-end wage earners working in the **formal economy**.
- **Government schemes:** The efforts are being made through the **Skill India Mission** to equip women with market-relevant skills to bridge the learning-to-livelihood gap and the gender pay gap.

[TO CURB USE OF CHEMICAL FERTILISERS, GOVT TO GIVE NOD TO PM PRANAM](#)

In News:

- The Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers is planning to launch a scheme called PM PRANAM.

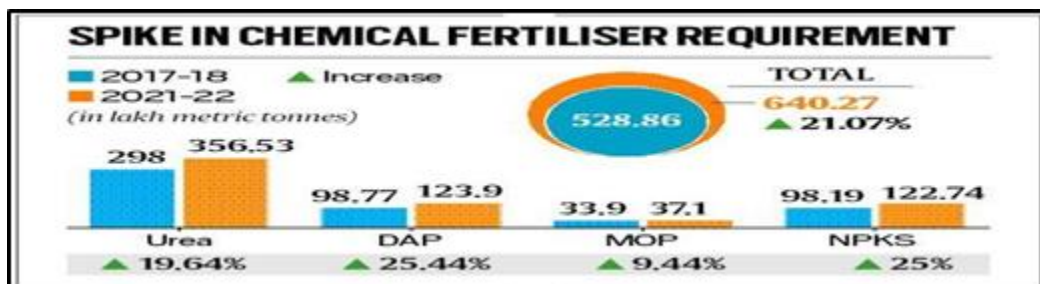
- **PM PRANAM** stands for - PM Promotion of Alternate Nutrients for Agriculture Management Yojana.
- The proposed scheme aims to encourage states to use less chemical fertilisers and to reduce the subsidy burden on chemical fertilisers.

Fertilisers

- Fertilisers (can be both organic and inorganic) are substances that provide one or more of the chemicals required for plant growth.
- As per industry experts, out of the **16 elements** necessary for plant growth, 9 elements are required in large quantities (major elements), while the other 7 are needed in smaller amounts (minor elements).
- **Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are known as primary plant nutrients;**
- Calcium, magnesium and sulphur, as secondary nutrients;
- Iron, manganese, copper, zinc, boron, molybdenum and chlorine as trace elements or micro-nutrients.
- The primary and secondary nutrient elements are known as major elements.

Fertilizer consumption in India

- The success of the agricultural sector in India is mainly dependent on the fertiliser industry.
- It assumes significance in view of the **sharp increase in the overall fertiliser requirement** in the country during the last five years.
- The maximum increase has been recorded in the requirement of DAP.



Burden of fertiliser subsidy

- Farmers purchase fertilisers at MRPs (maximum retail prices) that are lower than their normal supply-and-demand market rates or the cost to produce or import them.

- **For example**, the government set the MRP of neem-coated urea at Rs 5,922.22 per tonne (in 2020), while the average cost-plus price payable to domestic manufacturers and importers is around Rs 17,000 and Rs 23,000 per tonne, respectively.
- For, non-urea fertiliser (DAP, MOP, etc) MRPs are decontrolled or fixed by the companies.
- To ensure that these nutrients are priced at "reasonable levels," the government pays a flat per-tonne subsidy.
- The subsidy is paid to fertiliser companies, but the ultimate beneficiary is the farmer who pays MRPs that are lower than market-determined rates.
- **The subsidy burden** on chemical fertilisers is expected to reach Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23 (Rs 1.62 lakh crore last year), a figure that is 39% higher than last year.

Government initiatives to reduce usage of chemical fertilisers and to plug leakages in fertiliser subsidy:

- The Centre had introduced a direct benefit transfer (DBT) system in fertilisers, which was implemented in 2018.
- Under this system, **100% subsidy on various fertiliser grades is released to the fertiliser companies** on the basis of actual sales made by the retailers to the beneficiaries.
- Every retailer (over 2.3 lakh in India) now has a point-of-sale (PoS) machine that is linked to the Department of Fertilisers' e-Urvarak DBT portal.
- Only after the sale is registered on the e-Urvarak platform can a company claim a subsidy.
- Furthermore, the government included new nutrients such as **Nano urea** and bio-stimulants in the Fertilizer Control Order-1985.
- In addition, initiatives such as the Soil Health Card and neem-coated urea have been implemented.

News Summary - About the PM Promotion of Alternate Nutrients for Agriculture Management (PRANAM) Yojana:

- The proposed PM-PRANAM scheme was shared by the central government with state government officials at the recent National Conference on Agriculture for Rabi Campaign.
- The draft of this scheme is yet to be finalized.

Features of the proposed scheme

- According to the officials, the scheme will not have a separate budget and will be funded by savings of existing fertiliser subsidies under schemes run by the Department of Fertilisers.
- 50% of subsidy savings will be passed on to the state that saves the money as a grant.
 - 70% of the grant provided under the scheme can be used to create assets related to the technological adoption of alternate fertilisers and alternate fertiliser production units at the village block, and district levels.
 - The **remaining 30% grant** money can be used to reward and encourage farmers, panchayats, farmer producer organisations, and self-help groups involved in fertiliser reduction and awareness generation.
- To illustrate the calculation in reducing chemical fertiliser use, a state's increase or decrease in urea consumption in a year will be compared to its average consumption of urea over the previous three years.
 - Data from the Fertilizer Ministry's dashboard, **iFMS** (Integrated Fertilisers Management System), will be used for this purpose.
- The move is consistent with the government's recent emphasis on promoting the balanced use of fertilisers or alternative fertilisers.

COLOUR REVOLUTIONS, WHY THEY WORRY CHINA

In News:

- Chinese President Xi Jinping appealed to members of the SCO to cooperate with each other in order to prevent foreign powers from destabilizing their countries by inciting colour revolutions.
- He was speaking in the city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan at the annual Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit.

Colour revolutions

- Colour revolutions refer to a series of uprisings that first began in former communist nations in Eastern Europe in the early 2000s.
- They are also used in reference to popular movements in the Middle East and Asia.

- Most of these revolutions involved large-scale mobilisation on the streets, with demands for free elections or regime change, and calls for removal of authoritarian leaders.
- Protesters often wear a specific colour, such as in Ukraine's Orange Revolution.
- The term has also been used to describe movements named after flowers like the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia.

Few examples of colour revolutions

• **Orange Revolution**

- It refers to a series of protests that occurred in Ukraine between November 2004 and January 2005.
- The movement was in response to reports that claimed that the country's 2004 Presidential election was rigged in favour of the incumbent President Viktor Yanukovich.
- Yanukovich was backed by Russia while Viktor Yushchenko was an ally of the West.
- The election commission had declared Yanukovich the winner of the election, drawing criticism from the US and European Union.
- In the aftermath of the elections, protesters wearing orange took to the streets across the country.
- The results were subsequently annulled and the Ukrainian Supreme Court ordered a re-vote, in which Yushchenko emerged victorious and the movement was concluded.

• **Tulip Revolution**

- Also called the First Kyrgyz Revolution, the movement led to the ouster of Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev in early 2005.
- These protests were in response to the parliamentary elections in February 2002, in which Akayev's allies and family members won.
- Protests erupted in the country against Akayev who had been President since 1990.
- Finally, Akayev fled the country with his family and resigned later.

• **Jasmine Revolution**

- This was the popular uprising that occurred between December 2010 to January 2011 in Tunisia.
- The term Jasmine revolution was used in reference to Tunisia's national flower, to describe the movement.

- It was in response to the underlying corruption, unemployment, inflation and lack of political freedoms in the country.
- Tunisians were facing hardship and injustice under the reign of longtime President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.
- The protests not only led to Ali's ouster in January 2011, but also inspired a wave of protests in North Africa and the Middle East, which came to be known as the Arab Spring.

Why China is worried of Colour Revolution?

- In 2019, Beijing had said the protests in Hong Kong had taken on colour revolution characteristics.
- Hong Kong's protests started in June 2019 against plans to allow extradition to mainland China.
 - Critics feared this could undermine judicial independence and endanger dissidents.
- Until 1997, Hong Kong was ruled by Britain as a colony but then returned to China.
- Under the "one country, two systems" arrangement, it has some autonomy, and its people has more rights. The new extradition bill was considered to be against these freedoms.
- Russia and China have long criticised colour revolutions for being destabilising influences.
- As per them, these revolutions have been orchestrated by the United States and its Western allies to overthrow regimes in order to further their own geopolitical interests.

STATE LEVEL INSTITUTION ON LINES OF NITI AAYOG

A state level institution on the lines of NITI Aayog will be established in Maharashtra.



About:

- It will help to bring drastic changes in sectors like agriculture, health, education, employment, environment etc. in the state.
- Chief executive officer of NITI Aayog and other experts made a presentation on how Maharashtra will be assisted by the Aayog for bringing about changes in various sectors.
- Maharashtra government is planning to achieve target one trillion dollar economy by 2030, but with more hard work it can be achieved by 2027.

- ‘Asset monetization’ is important factor tabled by the NITI Aayog and the new constructed Samruddhi Mahamarg in the state is the best example of asset monetization.
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77th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived in New York to participate in the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.



About:

- The theme of the 77th UNGA is 'A Watershed Moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges'.
 - In keeping with India’s strong commitment to reformed multilateralism, the Minister will host a Ministerial meeting of the G4 - India, Brazil, Japan, and Germany - as well as participate at the High Level Meeting of the L-69 Group on 'Reinvigorating Multilateralism and Achieving Comprehensive Reform of the UN Security Council'.
 - The L-69 Group consists of developing countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean and Small Island Developing States, focused on reforms of the UN Security Council.
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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur has said that Indian companies have spent more than one trillion rupees in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) till March 2022.



About:

- He said, the areas of investment is poverty alleviation, healthcare, education and the environment among other. Mr Thakur said this while giving away the Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award India 2022 in New Delhi.
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- On April 1, 2014, India became the first country to legally mandate corporate social responsibility.
 - The rules in Section 135 of India’s Companies Act make it mandatory for companies of a certain turnover and profitability to spend 2% of their average net profit for the past three years on CSR.
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