

ECONOMY**Context: Need and significance of minimum wages in promoting inclusive growth and development****Why in News?**

The fifth annual survey by Fairwork India, which was done across 12 e-commerce platforms, paints a dismal picture of the working circumstances faced by gig workers in India.

- Fairwork is a group of researchers affiliated with the Centre for IT and Public Policy at the International Institute of Information Technology in Bangalore.
- The study looked at five fairwork concepts, including fair compensation, fair conditions, fair contracts, fair management, and fair representation.

➤ Minimum Wage and Worker Alienation:

- According to the report, just three platforms—Bigbasket, Flipkart, and Urban Company—have minimum wage regulations in place to guarantee that employees receive at least the minimum wage in their area.
- But no platform ensures that employees receive a livable pay. This year's study looks at how discrimination based on caste, class, gender, and religion is frequently connected to alienation, which is exacerbated by working circumstances.

➤ Safety, Contract Definition, and Employee Protections:

- A few platforms furthermore provide income loss compensation for accidents or medical emergencies, as well as accident insurance coverage.
- Companies have also implemented procedures to guarantee data security, contract lucidity, and worker dispute resolution procedures, including disciplinary action appeals.
- Regretfully, no platform obtained points for Fair Representation, suggesting that despite a rise in worker collectivization in recent years, collective worker bodies are not acknowledged.

What is the Indian gig economy scenario?**Definition:**

- The term "gig economy" describes a labour market where temporary jobs, freelancing, and short-term contracts are more common than long-term jobs.
- In the gig economy, people frequently work as independent contractors on a project-by-project basis, taking on different jobs or "gigs" in place of regular full-time jobs at one organisation.

Growth Scenario:

- India has become one of the world's leading countries for gig workers, or flex staffing, according to the Economic Survey 2020–21.
- According to a report by Niti Aayog on the gig economy, there are about 7.7 million workers in this sector; by 2029–2030, that number is predicted to increase to 23.5 million, or about 4% of the total labour force.
- At the moment, 31% of gig work is in low-skilled occupations like food delivery and cab driving, 47% are in medium-skilled occupations like plumbing and beauty services, and 22% are in high-skilled occupations like tutoring and graphic design.

Major Issues Faced by Gig Workers

- Because of their unclear work status, gig workers are frequently left out of social security and labour laws.
- Gig workers are not entitled to social security or other fundamental labour rights, such as minimum pay, workday restrictions, or other perks, because their status as independent contractors keeps them from receiving these benefits and legal safeguards.
- For qualified people and their families, Social Security offers benefits in the case of a worker's disability or death. Gig workers could not be as covered by these benefits, which could negatively impact their financial stability in trying times.

Government Initiatives:

- A special section on the "gig economy" is included in the 2020 Code on Social Security, which also requires gig businesses to make contributions to a Social Security Fund that will be managed by a board chaired by the government.
- The 2019 Code on Wages establishes a floor pay and minimum wage that apply to gig workers as well as organized and unorganized sectors.

What is India's Minimum Wage Policy?**The 2019 Code of Wages Act:**

- The Code attempts to clear the path for the implementation of minimum wages and labour reforms in the nation by replacing the antiquated and outdated labour regulations with more open and accountable ones.
- It aims to guarantee every worker's "Right to Sustenance" and aims to strengthen the statutory protection of the minimum wage by universalizing the minimum wage rules and timely wage payments to all employees, regardless of industry or wage ceiling.
- The Central Government has the authority to set the minimum wage by considering the level of living for labourers. It might establish varying floor salaries depending on the region.
- The minimal pay set by the central or state governments must be higher than the floor wage.

Fixation of Floor Wage:

- The Code on Wages Rules, 2020 makes reference to the idea of a floor wage, giving the central government the authority to set floor wages while accounting for the workers' minimal standards of living.
- State governments are not allowed to set minimum salaries below a certain threshold, known as the floor wage.
- Different floor level wages might be fixed for different geographic areas in accordance with the Wage Code. The worry of capital fleeing from higher-paying areas to lower-paying ones, however, has been exacerbated by this.

Way Forward

➤ **Worker Classification:**

- To guarantee gig workers receive the proper benefits and legal protections, establish clear criteria for classifying them as independent contractors or employees.
- In order to solve this issue, India's labour laws have been developing, and one important factor to take into account is the distinction between gig workers and regular employees.

➤ **Gains from Social Security:** Examine ways to offer gig workers social security benefits including health insurance, retirement savings, and unemployment benefits—possibly via a portable benefits system.

➤ **Wage Protection:** To prevent exploitation, put in place measures to guarantee that gig workers receive just remuneration. You should also think about establishing minimum wage requirements for particular gig roles.

➤ **Skill Development:** To increase gig workers' employability and income potential, support their ongoing skill development and training. Government-industry collaborations can help in providing training programs tailored to gig economy needs.

Conclusion: A well designed minimum wage system can reduce inequalities in income bridge Gender gaps in wages and alleviate poverty and also reduce the possibility for exploitation of organized labour

POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

CONTEXT: The Maharashtra Assembly Speaker has been given a deadline by the Supreme Court (SC) of India to rule on cases requesting the disqualification of members who have deviated from the Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leadership.

Legislators' disqualification

- Articles 102 and 191 are the provisions included in the Constitution: Article 102 of the Constitution lays forth the fundamental requirements for disqualification of an MP, whereas Article 191 outlines the requirements for an MLA.
- According to the Constitution, there are a number of reasons to be disqualified, such as having a lucrative job in the Indian or state governments, being mentally ill, being an unpaid insolvent, not being an Indian citizen, or obtaining citizenship in another nation.
- The Parliament may also pass laws governing the terms of disqualification under Article 102.

Anti defection law and Tenth schedule

The 52nd Amendment Act of 1985 was used by Parliament to add the 10th schedule to the Constitution. Legal grounds for disqualification include:

- If a political party member who has been elected willingly leaves the party.
- If a member of that House votes or abstains from voting in defiance of a directive from their political party or another authorized party without first receiving permission to do so.
- If a member who was elected independently decides to join a political party.
- If a member who has been nominated after the six-month period has passed joins a political party.

The speaker's role:

- Under the 10th schedule, pressing officers of the legislature have the authority to make the final decision about a legislator's disqualification; however, according to the Kihoto Hollohan case (1992), their decision is now susceptible to judicial review (e.g., on grounds of mala fide/bad intent etc.).
- The statute is ambiguous regarding how soon the Speaker or Chair of the House must act in anti-defection matters. It has been pending in the Maharashtra assembly case since July 2022.
- Experience has shown that, depending on their political affinities, Speakers either handle disqualification matters with considerable zeal or stoic indifference.
- Even if they are periodically reminded of their obligation to maintain objectivity and exhibit a feeling of urgency in Presiding Officers seem to prioritize their political allegiance over their constitutional responsibilities when addressing issues pertaining to the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.

The judiciary's role:

- Therefore, it is appropriate that the top court has instructed Speaker Rahul Narwekar to rule on the disqualification petitions filed against the government of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde by December 31 and the NCP breakaway group led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar by January 31, 2024 as well.
- Following a ruling by the Constitution Bench on May 11, 2023, which requested that the Speaker resolve the disqualification matter "within a reasonable period," the directives are a logical next step.
- There is no denying that the Speaker has had ample time to make a decision, despite the possibility that some procedural issues and the grouping of petitions have caused some delay. The Court had noted in a previous order from September
- Even without judicial orders, the question of whether a member has been disqualified cannot be handled in a leisurely or partisan manner.
- Recent political history is replete with examples of ruling parties casually recruiting opposition members in several States without any fear of disqualification because they know that friendly Speakers will not disqualify them.
- The Court had noted that it expected the Speaker to show deference to its directions, especially when he is acting as a tribunal under the Tenth Schedule.

Way forward

- India may consider adopting the UK model for the Speaker's position, in which a legislator elected to the Speaker of the House resigns from their political party membership in order to remain neutral in their functions.
- This would keep the Speaker's authority to decide disqualification issues intact, making it challenging to remove matters of defection from the political maze.

PRELIM FACTS**1. Prime Minister launches 'Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat)' platform on National Unity Day**

Context: MY Bharat is a self-governing body established by the Government of India to provide an overarching institutional mechanism for youth development and youth-led development powered by technology.

- It is an initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports to empower Indian youth through social mobility, educational equity, and practical skills

The platform connects young people to programs and learning opportunities in businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.

MY Bharat's creation would result in

- Youth Leadership Development.
- Better cooperation between youth ambitions and community needs.
- Convergence of existing programs improves efficiency.
- Serve as a one-stop shop for youth and ministries.
- Create a consolidated database for youth
- Creating a Phygital Ecosystem - a hybrid of physical and digital experiences - to ensure accessibility.

MY Bharat will benefit youth aged 15 to 29, in accordance with the definition of 'Youth' in the National Youth Policy.

- In the case of programme components specifically meant for adolescents, the beneficiaries will be in the age group of 10-19 years.

2. Annual Report on Road Accidents in India

Context: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has released the Annual Report on Road Accidents in India for the Year 2022.

The report was created using standardized formats as part of the Asia Pacific Road Accident Data (APRAD) base project (software).

UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) and its member countries use APRAD to develop, update, maintain, and manage the road accident database.

Key findings:

- 4.6 lakh accidents were reported, claiming around 1.68 lakh fatalities (9.4% more than in 2021).
- India has the most accident-related deaths, followed by China.
- The 18-45 age group accounted for 66.5% of total accident deaths.
- Road accidents were more common in rural areas.

Road accidents are caused by a variety of reasons, including human error (violation of traffic rules, failure to use safety measures), the road environment, and vehicle condition.

- Overspeeding was responsible for 72.3% of all accidents.

MoRTH has formulated multi-pronged **road safety strategy (aka 4Es):**

- Education: Awareness campaigns, driving training, road safety month/week
- Engineering (both roads and vehicles): Road Safety Audits, Electronic Detailed Accident Report (e- DAR), automated vehicle inspection centers, etc.
- Enforcement: Motor Vehicle Amendment Act 2019 and electronic enforcement devices like CCTV, etc.
- Emergency Care: Good Samaritan protection, compensation and ambulance services

3. Rajaji Tiger Reserve

- Uttarakhand government decided to establish Rajaji Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation.
 - About Rajaji Tiger Reserve Named after freedom fighter C. Rajgopalachari popularly known as "Rajaji".
- Situated along the hills of Shiwalik ranges and in transition zone between temperate western Himalaya and central Himalaya.
- Forest type: Ranges from semi-evergreen to deciduous and from mixed broad-leaved to Terai grassland.
- River: Ganga and Song Flora: Red Morning Glory, Malabar Melastome, Sal trees etc.
- Fauna: Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, Sloth Bear, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer etc

4. INFUSE mission

Context:

- Integral Field Ultraviolet Spectroscopy Experiment (INFUSE) mission
- NASA has launched the INFUSE mission.

Objective of the mission :

To spectroscopically image a section of Cygnus Loop, examining shock fronts as supernova material interacts with interstellar medium.

The Cygnus Loop is the remnant of a star 20 times the size of our Sun.

- A star imploded under its own gravity and exploded as a supernova some 20,000 years ago.
- A supernova is a massive stellar explosion.

It will be space's first far ultraviolet integral field spectrograph (IFS) with access to the Lyman ultraviolet.

5. Blue Flag Certification

- India has 12 Blue Flag Beaches.
- Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognized voluntary awards for beaches, marinas, and sustainable tourism boats.
- It is run by the international non-governmental organisation Foundation for Environmental Education, headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark.
 - It was started in 1985 in France and has been implemented outside Europe since 2001.
- For the award, high standards in the four categories of water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety must be met

ANSWER WRITING

Q. What is the difference between empathy and sympathy? How can empathy help a civil servant in understanding the needs and feelings of the stakeholders and delivering better public service?

Introduction

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The capacity to experience and comprehend another person's feelings is known as empathy, whereas sympathy is the sensation and expression of care for another person, frequently coupled with a desire for them to have a better life. While compassion is acknowledging the other person's sentiments from our own perspective, empathy entails placing ourselves in the other person's shoes and imagining how they feel.

	SYMPATHY	EMPATHY
DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS	Observing, Reacting, Immediate, Predominantly emotional awareness	Acknowledgement of suffering Understanding the person affective response
RESPONSE TO SUFFERING	Acknowledgement	Acknowledgement, understanding and Emotional intelligence
TYPE OF RESPONSE	A Emotional reaction to a distressing situation	Objective and affecting response to a distressing situation

Empathy can be extremely important in the civil service environment to comprehend stakeholders' demands and emotions and provide better public service:

Improved Understanding: Empathy enables public workers to have a deeper comprehension of the viewpoints and experiences of the individuals they assist. Civil servants can learn more about the issues, worries, and goals of the community by actively placing themselves in the shoes of stakeholders.

Better Communication: Civil servants with empathy are better communicators. In order to understand the actual needs and feelings of their people, they are better able to listen intently and pose pertinent questions. This promotes trust and collaboration by resulting in more honest and fruitful communication.

Tailored Solutions: Civil servants who possess a high degree of empathy are able to develop more individualized and efficient solutions. Through a thorough understanding of the distinct conditions of many stakeholders, policies and programmes may be created that cater to particular requirements and have a higher chance of success.

Reduced Conflict: By recognizing the feelings and worries of other parties, empathy helps diffuse any confrontations and disputes. This can open the door for reaching agreements and resolving disputes, resulting in a more tranquil and secure atmosphere.

Adaptation to Changing requirements: Empathy enables civil servants to adjust to the growing requirements and sentiments of their stakeholders in a world that is changing quickly. They can continue to be relevant and responsive, enabling public services to change in tandem with societal advancements.

Conclusion

Unlike sympathy, which only evokes feelings of worry and caring, empathy goes beyond this by genuinely comprehending and relating to the needs and feelings of those involved. A stronger, more inclusive society, better-informed policies, and enhanced service delivery are all possible outcomes of civil officials who demonstrate empathy.

MCQs

1. Awaous Motfla, recently seen in the news, is a:
 - a) Moth
 - b) Gecko
 - c) Frog
 - d) **Fish**
2. Consider the following statements regarding State Food Safety Index:
 1. It aims to create a competitive and positive change in the food safety ecosystem in India.
 2. It considers Consumer Empowerment as one of the parameter for its assessment.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. With reference to Propane, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a colourless gaseous hydrocarbon.
 2. It is produced during the fractional distillation of crude oil.
 3. It has a very low octane rating.

- How many of the above statements are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two**
 - All three
 - None
4. One Nation One Registration platform is an initiative launched by:
- Ministry of Education
 - Ministry of Commerce
 - NITI Aayog
 - National Medical Commission**
5. Consider the following statements regarding the INFUSE mission:
- It is an initiative of the European Space Agency.
 - Its objective is to understand the life cycle of stars.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements regarding the Cayman Islands:
- It is a US overseas territory located in the Pacific Ocean.
 - It is considered a tax haven because it does not impose a corporate tax.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following statements regarding Lambadi embroidery:
- It is embroidery with geometrical patterns done on cotton and silk fabrics.
 - Its theme is influenced by local forests and birds.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
8. The Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary is located in:
- Jharkhand
 - Maharashtra
 - Assam
 - Odisha**
9. The Rajaji Tiger Reserve is located in:
- Himachal Pradesh
 - Gujarat
 - Uttarakhand**
 - Madhya Pradesh
10. With reference to Carbon nanoflorets, consider the following statements:
- It can convert the light energy into thermal energy.
 - It results in a low amount of heat dissipated away.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2