Index

Source : www.pib.gov.in Date : 2023-02-08

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IMPLEMENTS VARIOUS SCHEMES TO PROMOTE AND DEVELOP ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING SECTOR ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Economics of Animal-Rearing incl. White, Blue & Pink Revolutions

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India is implementing various schemes to supplement the efforts of States/UTs for promotion and development of animal husbandry and dairying sector across the country:

Due to implementation of the aforesaid schemes of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Milk Production in the country has increased from 146.31 Million Tonnes in 2014-15 to 221.1

Million Tonnes in 2021-22 i.e. by 6.38% per annum during the last 8 years. Value of output of milk is more than Rs.9.32 lakh crore during 2021-22 which is higher than the agriculture produce and even more than the combined value of Paddy and Wheat. Egg production in the country has increased from 78.48 billion in 2014-15 to 129.53 billion in 2021-22. Egg production in the country is growing at the rate of 8% per annum.

Under NPDD, the physical progress during the last 5 years and current year is as under

Under DIDF, as on 31.12.2022, 58.70 Lakh Litre per Day (LLPD) Milk Processing Capacity, 113 BMCs with 3.4 LLPD capacities, 265 Metric Tonnes per Day (MTPD) Milk Drying capacity and 10.46 LLPD Value Added Products (VAP) manufacturing capacity have been established.

Under the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF), total 213 projects have been established which have given employment to approximately 24000 people directly and 1 lakh farmers indirectly since 2020-2021.

So far cumulative 16.91 crore animals were vaccinated against FMD in Round-I in 2020 and 24.94crore animals have been ear tagged in the country. The second round of vaccination against FMD has commenced and so far**,** 20.77 crore(as on January, 2023) animals have been vaccinated. Against Round-III of FMD vaccination, so far, 1.78crore animals have been vaccinated. The vaccination against Brucella has also commenced and so far, 1.62crore animals have been vaccinated.

As per data available on Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health (INAPH) portal, so far 3.08 crore farmers have been benefitted under Nationwide AI Programme component of Rashtriya Gokul Mission.There are so far 24.36 crore farmers registered directly on the INAPH portal, 10.12 crore farmers have been benefited against FMD and 79.02 lakh farmers benefited against Brucellosis.

This information was given by Shri Parshottam Rupala, Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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SS/IG

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Source : www.thehindu.com Date : 2023-02-09

THE ROLE OF LABOUR UNIONS IN EMERGING SECTORS

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues Related to Poverty, Inclusion, Employment & Sustainable Development

February 09, 2023 12:15 am | Updated 01:23 am IST

There have been many reports of lay-offs in the last few months, especially in emerging sectors. Lay-offs have been taking place not only in India, but in major economies like the U.S. too. Large, medium and small enterprises as well as start-ups have let go of dozens or even thousands of workers. In 2022, start-ups including Byju's, Ola, Unacademy, Vedantu, Chargebee, WhiteHat Jr, Udaan and CityMall announced lay-offs. Their reasons included restructuring, cost-cutting, automation, financial constraints, performance rating, adverse economic conditions and changes in the business model. At the global level, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft, Twitter and Apple, among others, have let go of employees. Amazon cited an uncertain economy and rapid hires in the past as reasons for retrenchment.

At the same time, unionisation attempts in these giant companies have caught our imagination. Amazon workers at the warehouse at Staten Island called JFK8 succeeded in forming the Amazon Labour Union under the leadership of Chris Smalls, who had been fired from the company. Amazon reacted by filing numerous objections with the National Labour Relations Board, the federal body that protects the rights of private sector employees to join together. On the other hand, employees at the warehouse near Albany voted overwhelmingly against unionisation in October 2022 as many of them were sceptical of the bargaining power of a union vis-à-vis a giant like Amazon.

In India, Amazon shut down Amazon Food and Amazon Academy. It retrenched workers in the Indian facility in a gradual manner. The Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate, which works for the welfare, rights, justice and empowerment of IT (Information Technology), BPO (business process outsourcing) and KPO (knowledge process outsourcing) professionals in India, has alleged that Amazon violated labour laws. It also complained to the Union Labour Minister, seeking his Ministry's intervention. The Deputy Chief Labour Commissioner in Bengaluru served a notice seeking information from the company. But it is well-known how seriously employers, especially multi-national corporations (MNCs), take labour departments; they ignore conciliation meetings more often than trade unions. NITES President Harpreet Singh Saluja vows to fight Amazon, but this will not be easy.

The question we can then ask is whether collective action can be taken in emerging enterprises. Start-ups hardly have trade unions in their facilities and so retrenchments in these companies go uncontested.

Compared to conventional industries such as manufacturing, public utilities, and conventional financial sectors such as traditional banking and insurance, forming unions in modern and emerging sectors is much more difficult. Long ago, Freeman and Medoff examined the effect of trade unionism on the exit behaviour of workers in the context of the ‘exit-voice-loyalty’ model of Albert Hirschman. I use this with some modifications to explain my point.

On the demand side, the IT and IT-enabled Services employees felt no need for trade unions as unions are typically associated with manual labour, while IT employees are associated with “elitism” and “professionalism”. It is believed that IT employees do not need trade unions as they have competitive compensation pay packages, supposedly good conditions of work and a mechanism to address grievances. And so, they stay on and are loyal to the company and the industry. If these conditions are violated, they switch to other organisations as they have the required skill sets (exit); hence, labour turnover in this sector has been rather high. They do not collectively bargain or strike or resort to legal action as middle-class employees who go to court would be stigmatised (voice). And many survive by simply keeping quiet (loyalty).

Despite this, announcements of massive lay-offs, such as by Tata Consultancy Services in 2015, have led to the birth of labour unions in this sector in India. Bad human resource policies and practices, too, have provoked or prompted workers to unionise. But the rate of formation of unions and the union activities in this industry (on the supply side) do not instill confidence in the minds of employees.

Unions in the IT sector have to deal with both Indian and Western behemoths, which is a huge ask. The state obviously needs MNCs to stay on in India. Start-ups don’t have the ideal conditions for unionisation. Employees would rather accept low-paying jobs than unionise. Further, trade unions are fighting on multiple fronts. They are struggling to retain historical labour rights, secure social security for the millions of informal workers and fight the adversities created during and after COVID-19. Industrial accidents, too, are frequent. Many garment and electronics industries, for instance, which have wide supply chains, violate labour rights. Unions have sometimes succeeded in securing marginal rights. But there is only so much that they can do. The Amazon story is going viral in the 500 million labour market in India where hardly 10% of the total workforce is unionised.

However, this is not to brush aside the fact that unions need to be encompassing of all workers and be the vanguard of workers’ mobilisation. After all, they are the only historically tested collective labour institutions.

K.R. Shyam Sundar is Professor, XLRI, Xavier School of Management, Jamshedpur

logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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Source : www.thehindu.com Date : 2023-02-12

MILLETS FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Agriculture Issues and related constraints

February 11, 2023 07:30 pm | Updated 08:22 pm IST

Production: India produces around 12 million metric tonnes of millets annually. | Photo Credit: Biswaranjan Rout

Anna Gibbs, who was an intern at *Science News*, writes in the May 9, 2022 issue that “no matter how you slice it, climate change will alter what we eat in the future”. Half of all calories consumed by humans come from maize, rice, and wheat. We depend on 13 crops for 80% of our nutritional needs. Their inventories will dwindle as climate change leads to erratic rainfall and weather extremes. There is a need for growing hardier species to help secure our needs, which is why millets are gaining significance.

Millets are grown in warm regions with poor soil and yield large crops of small seeds which are used to make flour. Some examples of millets are pearl millet or *bajra*, sorghum or *jowar*, finger millet or *ragi*. The minor millets are foxtail millet or *thenai*, little millet or *samai*, and barnyard millet or *sanwa*, which is used in bread, rusk and biscuits.

Leading producer

Millets have been staple foods for people in Asia and Africa for over 10,000 years. They are climate-resilient, need little water and grow well in warmer, drier environments. India produces around 12 million metric tonnes of millets annually, according to Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare data. India happens to be the number one in the world in producing millets, followed by China and Niger (*HelgiLibrary*).

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO/UNO) has declared the year 2023 as the international year of millets. In keeping with this, India’s Agriculture Ministry has lined up a series of millet-centric plans and activities on the use of millets, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. It also plans “eat right melas” in Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Indeed, the Chennai-based M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) has been very active in promoting the production and consumption of millets.

While most of us eat wheat and rice as staple foods, they do not have the nutritive value of millets. Hence, they are not what are called ‘nutri-cereals’. Millets have significant amounts of proteins, dietary fibre, vitamin B, and several metal ions which staple foods such as rice lack. It is thus important that millets are added to our daily food for their benefits.

Economics of millet production

Professor Madhura Swaminathan, of the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI Bangalore) and the Chairperson of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in her article in *The Hindu* of January 31, 2023, gives a brief outline of the economics of the issue. She points out that even if about 20% of rice and wheat were to be replaced by millets in the public distribution system (PDS), it would greatly benefit the health of schoolchildren in their midday meals. Increasing the production of millets and reversing the decline in the area cultivated are feasible measures. But they may not be easy to implement and require multistep interventions. The Government of India, and the states of Karnataka and Odisha have initiated millet missions, which are welcome steps.

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Source : www.thehindu.com Date : 2023-02-13

NOT LOSING STEAM: ON LATEST INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT ESTIMATES

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues relating to Growth & Development - Industry & Services Sector incl. MSMEs and PSUs

February 13, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 10:09 am IST

The latest industrial output estimates from the National Statistical Office indicate an across-the-board loss of momentum in December with overall production growth slowing to 4.3% year-on-year, from November's 7.3% pace. While activity was unchanged or moderated across all the three constituents of the Index of Industrial Production — mining, manufacturing and electricity — the largest sector manufacturing, with a weight of almost 78%, was the biggest drag as the expansion decelerated to 2.6%, from the preceding month's 6.4% increase. Assessed on a sequential or month-on-month basis, mining and manufacturing posted slowdowns, with only electricity growing 7.6% in the wake of November's contraction of 1.5%. Manufacturing, where the sequential growth slowed by more than 2 percentage points to 4.7%, from 6.9% in the previous month, was weighed down by three of the six use-based sectors including consumer durables, consumer non-durables and capital goods. The three categories reflect a broader trend in the economy. For one, private consumption is still to regain an enduring footing notwithstanding a post-pandemic surge in pent-up spending most visible in the services sector. Production of consumer durables shrank 10.4% year-on-year and 2.2% sequentially in December, after rebounding in November following festival demand. Non durables experienced a sharp sequential deceleration, with growth braking to 7.4% month-on-month.

The capital goods data point to continuing uncertainty on the private sector investment front. Production of the plant and machinery ordered when expanding or starting ventures is struggling to sustain momentum, with output growth sliding appreciably both sequentially and year-on-year. In December, growth from a year earlier in the segment slowed to 7.6%, compared with November's 21.6%. Month-on-month, the slowdown was starker with output barely inching up 0.2%, after expanding 13% in November. However, primary and infrastructure and construction goods offer hope that some positive momentum can be built on with the right policy measures. While the sequential pace of growth for primary goods output quickened to 9.2% from 1.1%, the month-on-month advance for infrastructure and construction ticked up to 4%, from November's 3.2%. With the RBI's survey of the manufacturing sector's outlook indicating firms expect some softening in order books and overseas demand in the current quarter, a lot will hinge on policy staying supportive. The Union Budget's plan to provide a push for infrastructure through a substantial increase in the government's capital expenditure should provide a big fillip to construction goods and is likely to feed through to other sectors as well in the coming months.

To read this editorial in Telugu, click here.

To read this editorial in Kannada, click here.

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Source : www.thehindu.com Date : 2023-02-18

SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE STORY OF TWO BUDGETS

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues relating to Growth & Development - Public Finance, Taxation & Black Money incl. Government Budgeting

February 18, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 10:38 am IST

At a brick kiln at Ramasara village in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan | Photo Credit: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Presenting the Union Budget 2023-24 on February 1, the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, asserted that ‘since 2014, the central government has ensured a better quality of life, and a life of dignity’ for all its citizens. But Budget figures help distinguish rhetoric from the truth. This year, severe cuts in various social security and welfare schemes such as food security and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), have undermined the already precarious lives of large numbers of poor people in India.

A segment that has been sidelined is the crores of the elderly and other social security pensioners who are being callously pushed towards destitution. Since 2007, social security pensions being given by the central government under the centrally sponsored National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), have remained frozen at an appallingly low sum of 200 for the elderly and 300 per month for widows and persons with disabilities. In addition, only those who appear on the obsolete and discredited Below Poverty Line (BPL) lists prepared as in Census 2001 are given pensions. As a result, the budget for the NSAP has remained constant, at approximately 9,000 crore, and steadily reducing in real terms. This year, the NSAP saw a reduction of 16 crore, decreasing from 9,652.31 crore in FY2022-23 (BE) to 9,636.32 crore for FY 2023-24 (BE), making a mockery of a so-called model of “inclusive growth”.

Nine days after the Union Budget, on February 10, the Rajasthan Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, presented the Rajasthan Budget, which was a lesson in contrasts. Brushing aside the Bharatiya Janata Party’s criticism of the rights-based approach to development, Mr. Gehlot announced a landmark, and pioneering, Minimum Income Guarantee and Pension law to be enacted in the State, providing 125 days of work through the rural or urban employment guarantee, and a minimum social security pension of 1,000 per month, with an automatic increase of 15% per annum.

Editorial | Budget gives more to the affluent than to the poor

NSAP is a centrally sponsored social security scheme that provides non-contributory income security to the elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities from “BPL families”. The central

government's contribution to the three main schemes under this programme, the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), the Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), and the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), has remained the same over the last 15 years. The percentage share allotted to NSAP of the total expenditure budget has steadily declined from 0.58% in FY2014-15(BE) to 0.21% in the current budget (FY2023-24). In addition to the central contribution, State governments are encouraged to match the amount as the central contribution under the NSAP's guidelines. But as the central government contribution remains pathetically low, trends across 36 States/Union Territories indicate that a majority of the States are providing several times the suggested amount.

Today, Rajasthan provides social security pensions to over 90 lakh people, with the NSAP covering only a small part of the pension of 10 lakh pensioners. After this Budget announcement in Rajasthan, the total amount spent on pensions is expected to go up to 11,500 crore, approximately 30% more than the entire national social security pensions budget under NSAP.

Failure to index social sector expenditure to inflation has led to the even greater marginalisation of vulnerable people. India's cumulative inflation rate from 2007 to 2023 is 193.19% with the average annual inflation rate of 6.95%. This means that 200 in 2007 would have become 586.38 in 2023 if indexed. In 2016, hundreds of social security pensioners on dharna wrote to Members of Parliament and cabinet Ministers above the age of 60, offering them a day's pension with the request that they try and live for just one day with the sum of 7. The Congress party's Jairam Ramesh, even when he was Rural Development Minister, had publicly described this sum as a "cruel joke". It is notable that just the annual increase in dearness allowance and dearness relief for about one crore central government employees and pensioners costs the exchequer approximately 12,000 crore — roughly 30% more than the total expenditure on social security pensions.

It is not just the amount, but also the numbers receiving pensions that is of importance. Central assistance to States/Union Territories under NSAP is determined based on the BPL population of the State. For calculating the estimated number of beneficiaries under each scheme for each State, the central government relies on the population figures of Census 2001. Additionally, the stringent criteria of providing disability pensions only to those with a disability level of 80% or more, has excluded lakhs of the disabled even within the obsolete BPL category.

In 2013, the Rajasthan government changed its eligibility criteria to expand the coverage of pensioners by making economically vulnerable women above 55, and men above 58 eligible for old-age pension. It also permitted widows with adult children to receive a widow pension, and included anyone with more than 40% disability to receive a disability pension. As a result, the number of social security pensioners in the State grew from 14 lakh to 58 lakh. Today, this figure has crossed 90 lakh, all of whom will come under the cover of the proposed law.

Other States, and even the Government of India should follow the example of Rajasthan and take the necessary steps to change their existing schemes into an Act that provides more credible entitlements, strengthens accountability, and offers the same legal protection as other welfare laws. The Central government must recognise that pension is a right for work done by unorganised sector workers, who are contributing seminally to the GDP and economy all their lives. People's movements and campaigns have demanded a universal and non-contributory minimum monthly pension equal to 50% of the minimum wage that is periodically adjusted to inflation. This rights-based approach is not based on charity, but on the recognition of the right to ensure minimum conditions for workers to live their retired lives with dignity.

Budget 2023 | Funds for minority schemes slashed, allocation reduced 38% than last year

The two election-year Budgets present sharp ideological differences of the parties at the Centre and in Rajasthan. Whether the Ashok Gehlot government's measures will yield electoral gains, or the Narendra Modi government will pay the price at the ballot box with its cuts to social security depends on many factors beyond public welfare policies.

However, for the vulnerable working people, senior citizens and the disabled, rights-based entitlements provide a measure of dignified living which should be the objective of any democracy, regardless of the immediate electoral implications. Ultimately, it is our compassion, and commitment to meet the basic needs of our most marginalised people that will gauge us as a society, and as a nation.

Asmi Sharma is associated with the Jan Sarokar platform. Nancy Pathak is associated with the Pension Parishad campaign. Nikhil Dey is Founding Member of The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan. The writers are all a part of the Pension Parishad campaign, a people's movement working on the issue of social security rights and pensions.

Union Budget / Budget 2023 / budgets and budgeting / Rajasthan / welfare / social conditions / human rights

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Source : www.thehindu.com Date : 2023-02-24

SAFE ACROSS BORDERS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE-PAYNOW LINK

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues relating to Growth & Development - Banking, NPAs and RBI

February 24, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 11:36 am IST

Transferring money to a relative studying or living in Singapore or receiving remittances from a family member working in the Southeast Asian city-state just got a whole lot simpler. On February 21, the Reserve Bank of India Governor, Shaktikanta Das, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore's Managing Director, Ravi Menon, made token instantaneous cross-border remittances to each other using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and PayNow mobile applications on their phones in India and Singapore, respectively. The transactions marked the start of a cross-border link for real-time person-to-person money transfers between South Asia's largest economy and its littoral neighbour across the Malacca Strait, which is home to a sizeable Indian diaspora as well as tens of thousands of migrant workers employed in Singapore's humming construction, marine shipyard and services sectors. The link now enables individuals wishing to remit either Singapore dollar (SGD) or Indian rupee funds for the 'maintenance of a relative' or as a 'gift' to transfer the money seamlessly using the UPI at the Indian end and the PayNow app at the Singapore end. To start with, six banks in India including three state-run, two private and the Indian unit of Singapore's DBS Bank will be facilitating inbound remittances to their account holders, while one private lender and the three public sector banks would enable their Indian customers to send money using the link. In Singapore, customers of DBS Bank and the non-bank lender Liquid Group can avail of the transfer facility.

Though a small start, given that the daily transaction limit is set at 60,000 or about SGD 1,000, the link is significant in that it enables individuals to quickly and safely remit money to their loved ones without the hassles of having to go to a bank branch or a wire transfer facility's outlet or having to rely on the higher-cost and riskier 'hawala' channels. The tie-up is also part of a wider regional effort to facilitate cross-border real-time money transfers in a manner that reduces operational costs for individuals and merchants, while at the same time reducing the reliance on an external settlement currency, which hitherto has predominantly been the U.S. dollar. Singapore, which had established a similar payment link with Thailand in 2021, is part of a larger five-member initiative among the central banks of Southeast Asian economies including Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines that aims to interconnect their domestic digital payment systems. India too could build on the springboard it has gained in Singapore to further its cross-border digital payment linkages and extend the partnership to the city-state's other Association of Southeast Asian Nations partners. Besides a sure-shot boost to regional trade and tourism, such a network would help India to further formalise the flow of inbound remittances.

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