ECONOMY

Wage Rate Index (WRI)

Recently, the government has revised the base year for Wage Rate Index (WRI) to 2016 which will replace the old series with a base of 1963-65.The Wage Rate Index Number measures the relative changes in wage rates over a period of time, high or low Wage Rate Index in an industry does not necessarily indicate high or low wage rate in that industry as compared to other industries.

A base year is the first of a series of years in an economic or financial index and is typically set to an arbitrary level of 100.

Key Points

About:

- The Ministry of Labour & Employment has released a new series of Wage Rate Index (WRI) with base year 2016, being compiled and maintained by the Labour Bureau, an attached office of the ministry.
- It is based on the recommendations of the International Labour Organization and the National Statistical Commission.
- The new series on WRI has been compiled on a half-year basis (on the first of January and July every year) as against the annual in the existing series.
- The new WRI basket (2016=100) has enhanced the scope and coverage in terms of occupations and industries as compared to old WRI series (1963-65=100).
- Of the 37 industries covered in the new series, 16 new ones - including textile garments, footwear and petroleum - have been added under the manufacturing sector.
- In the new series, the oil mining industry has been introduced in the basket in place of mica mines industry, to make the mining sector more representative of the three different kinds of mining namely coal, metal and oil.
- Total 3 plantation industries namely tea, coffee and rubber have been retained in the new WRI basket with enhanced coverage.
- The top five industries - motor vehicles, coal mines, textile garments, iron & steel and cotton textiles together account for 46% of the total weight.

Expected Benefits:

- The revised base will be more representative and play a critical role in determining the minimum wages and national floor wages along with other parameters.
- The government periodically revises the base year for major economic indicators to reflect the changes in the economy and to capture the wage pattern of workers.
- It provides useful tips to employers on deciding on the appropriate human resource strategy.

WRI 2020:

- The All India Wage Rate Index Number for all the 37 industries stood at 119.7 in 2020 (half yearly 2) which shows an increment of 1.6% over the index in 2020 (half yearly 1).
- At sector level, the highest Wage Rate Index in 2020 (half yearly 2) was reported in the Plantation Sector followed by the Manufacturing Sector and Mining Sector.
  1. **Highest Wage Rate Index:**The highest Wage Rate Index was recorded in Drugs & Medicines, followed by Sugar, Motor Cycles, Jute Textiles and Tea Plantation.
  2. **Lowest Wage Rate Index:**The lowest Wage Rate Index was recorded in Rubber Plantation, followed by Paper, Castings & Forgings , Woollen Textiles and Synthetic Textiles.

POLITY

Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

Recently, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has completed 100 years.

PAC is one of the three Financial Parliamentary committees, the other two are the Estimates Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings.Parliamentary committees draw their authority from Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).

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Key Points
PAC:

- **Establishment:** The Public Accounts Committee was introduced in 1921 after its first mention in the Government of India Act, 1919 also called Montford Reforms. The Public Accounts Committee is now constituted every year under Rule 308 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
- **Appointment:** The Chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Speaker of Lok Sabha.
- It is to be noted that the Committee, not being an executive body, can only make decisions that are advisory by nature.
- **Members:** It presently comprises 22 members (15 members elected by the Lok Sabha Speaker, and 7 members elected by the Rajya Sabha Chairman) with a term of one year only.
- **Purpose:** It was framed with the purpose of ascertaining whether money granted to the Government by the Parliament has been spent by the former within the "scope of demand" or not, the PAC restricts any Minister from being elected as a member of it.
- **Functions:**
  1. To examine the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by the House to meet the expenditure, the annual Finance Accounts of the government and,
  2. Such other accounts laid before the House as the Committee may think fit except those relating to such Public Undertakings as are allotted to the Committee on Public Undertakings.
  3. Apart from the Reports of Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on Appropriation Accounts of the Government, the Committee examines the various Audit Reports of the CAG on revenue receipts, expenditure by various Ministries/Departments of Government and accounts of autonomous bodies.
  4. The Committee looks upon savings arising from incorrect estimating or other defects in procedure no more leniently than it does upon excesses.

Importance of Parliamentary Committees:

- **Provides Forum:**
  1. Parliament deliberates on matters that are complex, and therefore need technical expertise to understand such matters better.
  2. Committees help with this by providing a forum where members can engage with domain experts and government officials during the course of their study.
- **Build Consensus Across Political Parties:**
  1. Committees also provide a forum for building consensus across political parties.
  2. The proceedings of the House during sessions are televised, and MPs are likely to stick to their party positions on most matters.
  3. Committees have closed door meetings, which allows them to freely question and discuss issues and arrive at a consensus.
- **Examine Policy Issues:**
  1. Committees also examine policy issues in their respective ministries, and make suggestions to the government.
  2. The government has to report back on whether these recommendations have been accepted or not.
  3. Based on this, the Committees then table an Action Taken Report, which shows the status of the government's action on each recommendation.

Issues Arises by not involving the Committees:

- **Weakening of Parliamentary System Government:**
  1. A parliamentary democracy works on the doctrine of fusion of powers between parliament and the executive, but the Parliament is supposed to maintain oversight of the government and keep its power in check.
  2. Thus, by circumventing the Parliamentary committees in the passing of significant legislation, there is a risk of weakening democracy.

2

- **Enforcing Brute Majority:**
  1. In the Indian system, it is not mandatory for bills to be sent to committees. It's left to the discretion of the Chair — the Speaker in the Lok Sabha and Chairperson in the Rajya Sabha.
  2. By giving discretionary power to the Chair, the system has been specially rendered weak in a Lok Sabha where the ruling party has a brute majority.

Way Forward

- Parliament has the central role in our democracy as the representative body that checks the work of the government. In order to fulfil its constitutional mandate, it is imperative that Parliament functions effectively.
- Also, proper scrutiny of the bills is an essential requirement of quality legislation. Circumventing the parliamentary committees while passing legislations undermines the very spirit of democracy.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Greater Tipraland: Tripura

Recently, several tribal outfits in Tripura have joined hands to push their demand for a separate state, Greater Tipraland for indigenous communities in the region. Among the political parties that have come together for the cause are TIPRA Motha (Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance) and IPFT (Indigenous People's Front of Tripura).

Key Points

The Demand:

- The parties are demanding a separate state of 'Greater Tipraland' for the indigenous communities of the north-eastern state.
- They want the Centre to carve out the separate state under Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution.
  1. Among the 19 notified Scheduled Tribes in Tripura, Tripuris (aka Tipra and Tiprasas) are the largest.
  2. According to the 2011 census, there are at least 5.92 lakh Tripuris in the state, followed by Bru or Reang (1.88 lakh) and Jamatias (83,000).

Immediate Cause:

- The churn in the state's politics with the rise of TIPRA Motha and the Assembly polls due in early 2023 are the two major reasons behind the development.

Historical Background:

- Tripura was a kingdom ruled by the Manikya dynasty from the late 13th century until the signing of the Instrument of Accession with the Indian government in 1949.
- The demand stems from the anxiety of the indigenous communities in connection with the change in the demographics of the state, which has reduced them to a minority.
- It happened due to the displacement of Bengalis from the erstwhile East Pakistan between 1947 and 1971.
- From 63.77% in 1881, the population of the tribals in Tripura was down to 31.80% by 2011.
- In the intervening decades, ethnic conflict and insurgency gripped the state, which shares a nearly 860-km long boundary with Bangladesh.
- The joint forum has also pointed out that the indigenous people have not only been reduced to a minority, but have also been dislodged from land reserved for them by the penultimate king of the Manikya dynasty Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman.

Initiatives to Address the Issue:

- **Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council:**
  1. The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTADC) was formed under the sixth schedule of the Constitution in 1985 to ensure development and secure the rights and cultural heritage of the tribal communities. 'Greater Tipraland' envisages a situation in which the entire TTADC area will be a separate state. It also proposes dedicated bodies to secure the rights of the Tripuris and other aboriginal communities living outside Tripura.

3

2. The TTADC, which has legislative and executive powers, covers nearly two-third of the state's geographical area.
3. The council comprises 30 members of which 28 are elected while two are nominated by the Governor.

- **Reservation:** Also, out of the 60 Assembly seats in the state, 20 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

Other Demands in the North East

1. Greater nagalim (Parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Myanmar)
2. Bodoland (Assam)
3. Tribal Autonomy Meghalaya

Way Forward

- Economic and social viability rather than political considerations must be given primacy.
- There should be certain clear-cut parameters and safeguards to check the unfettered demands.
- It is better to allow democratic concerns like development, decentralisation and governance rather than religion, caste, language or dialect to be the valid bases for conceding the demands for a new state.
- Apart from this the fundamental problems of development and governance deficit such as concentration of power, corruption, administrative inefficiency etc must be addressed.

PRELIMS FACT

Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojna

Recently, the Ministry of Culture has launched a Scheme of Financial Assistance for the Development of Buddhist/Tibetan Culture and Art under "Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojna (KSVY)". Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to the voluntary Buddhist and Tibetan Organizations including Monasteries engaged in the propagation and scientific development of Buddhist/ Tibetan Culture and tradition, located in any part of the country. The quantum of funding is Rs.30 lakhs per year for an organization.

Key Points

- KSVY is an umbrella scheme under the Ministry of Culture for the promotion of art and culture in the country. It is a central sector scheme.
- The ministry implements many schemes under KSVY, where the grants are sanctioned/approved for holding programs/activities.
1. Scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Art and Culture.
2. Scheme of Financial Assistance for Creation of Cultural Infrastructure.
3. Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which aims to promote the 13 intangible cultural heritage of India, recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Since the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, there has been a discernible improvement in India's counterterrorism mechanisms. Complex challenges, however, continue to confront India. Examine. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

The November 2008 Mumbai attacks, also referred to as the 26/11 attacks, prompted the central government to critically heighten its counter-terrorism operations and re-examine several aspects of its already straining ties with Pakistan. It is 13 years since the series of dreadful terror attacks in Mumbai when 10 members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a jihadist outfit based in Pakistan, carried out 12 coordinated attacks leaving 166 dead and lasting as many as four days across major locations.

Body

Improvements in India's counterterrorism mechanisms

- The major domestic response to Mumbai has been an emphasis on streamlined coordination between agencies across state and federal lines.

4

- A new National Investigation Agency (NIA) was created with aim of the NIA is to empower a federal agency to investigate major crimes such as terrorism and organized crime without having to be asked to do so by the states.
- India's security apparatus has been reinforced with the establishment of Multi-Agency Coordination Centres (MACCs) and Subsidiary Multi-Agency Coordination Centres (SMACCs).
- An infusion of funding and personnel into the overall security apparatus has also been promised, and the NSG has been deployed throughout the country to offer a quicker response to future attacks
- One significant reform undertaken post-26/11 was the clear designation of coastal security responsibilities to different agencies like Indian Navy (beyond 12 NM), Coast Guard (5-12 NM) and Marine Police (Baseline to 5 NM).
- Coordination between various agencies has improved, joint exercises are being regularly conducted to familiarise with the standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the levels of surveillance has been enhanced as well.
- Coastal mapping has also been undertaken by the states towards improving awareness about the coastal areas. For instance, ISRO in collaboration with the West Bengal state police has also developed a coastal information system with the dual aims of creating a digital database, and creating a framework for the visualisation and analysis of coastal geospatial data.
- After successful proof-of-concept trials by the Indian Navy and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) of a satellite-based tracking system using GSAT-6 satellite, and subsequent successful field trials, close to 5,000 mechanised boats in Tamil Nadu are been progressively fitted with the indigenously developed satellite-based transponder systems.
- Some states have already initiated concerted steps to ramp up their cyber capabilities.
- Besides enacting cyber legislations, the government has also undertaken organisational measures by establishing new centres for cyber security such as the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre and the National Cyber Coordination Centre; creating a division covering Cyber and Information Security within the Ministry of Home Affairs; and improving institutional capacity building through training of personnel and generating awareness.
- India has also fought hard to cut off the terror finance to rogue nations with the global support like FATF.

Challenges that India is still facing

- Terrorist groups are making effective use of technology, social media and other innovative tactics not only to evade arrest and prosecution but to disseminate their propaganda and recruit foot soldiers.
- The impact of social media on the spread of terrorism can be seen in the conflict in Kashmir, where there is a growing trend of increased radicalisation especially amongst the youth.
- The multiple challenges emanating from the cyber domain include interference in elections through the use of propaganda in social media, fake news leading to panic, and digital disruption of energy assets and transportation systems.
- Recognising the difficulty of militarily defeating state forces, terrorists are aiming to create spectacle through lone-wolf attacks and suicide missions.
- Funding of the terror outfits are being done through the money from drug peddling, dark web, cryptocurrency and money laundering activities.
- India also suffers from inadequate inter-agency coordination which, in turn, leads to lack of effective intelligence monitoring and security response.

Way forward

- To improve the level of coordination, inter-operability amongst the agencies must be enhanced.
- This can be complemented with a comprehensive integrated border management system to guard the border areas where infiltrations take place.

5

- Enabling timely transportation of security forces during terrorist attacks
- India must integrate all its resources for deployment to combat any future contingency. Essential equipment and weapons systems must be acquired.
- Terrorism has moved beyond the physical space to the digital space. In this context, the gathering of intelligence needs to become multi-faceted as well.
- India's security forces must create effective counter-narratives and build an environment that does not lead to marginalisation and radicalisation as is increasingly seen in the case of homegrown jihadis in the Valley.
- Radicalism must be dealt with by intelligently balancing "soft" and "hard" approaches.
- India should build robust systems to ensure uninterrupted and safe operations of the country's digital infrastructure.
- Collaboration between government, media and public to raise awareness about anti-terrorism.
- At a global level, India can use its UNSC membership to get the CCIT ratified at UN.

Conclusion

As the manifestations of terrorism continue to change rapidly and become increasingly technology-centric, State forces responsible for the country's counterterrorism response will have to adapt to these shifts and build the resilience of India's security ecosystem.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. The Global State of Democracy Report, 2021 was recently released by the
   a. National Democratic Institute
   b. Democracy International
   c. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
   d. National Endowment for Democracy

Q2. Among the following cities, which one is nearest to the Nallamala Forest?
   a. Amaravati
   b. Visakhapatnam
   c. Kurnool
   d. Hyderabad

Q3. Consider the following statements about Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):
   1. It is a non-governmental organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.
   2. The motto of ASEAN is "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".
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

Q4. Suez Canal connects the
   a. Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.
   b. Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara.
   c. Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Aden.
   d. Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.

Q5. Which of the following national park is famous for its population of the Wild water buffalo?
   a. Bhitarkanika National Park
   b. Campbell Bay National Park
   c. Manas National Park
   d. Govind Pashu Vihar National Park