



DAILY MAINS NEWSLETTER

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Index

Mains Value Addition		
Mains Analysis		
Topic No	Topic Name	Source
1	It is getting from bad to worse for women workers	The Hindu
2	Can a single Lightning flash kill 18 elephants? Science says yes, in various ways	Indian Express

Mains Value Addition

How rice & wheat exports hit a record high

Syllabus - GS3: Issues related to Agriculture & exports

Analysis: -

- Last fiscal year, a record 92 million tonnes (mt) of rice & wheat was distributed from the central pool.
- Where 60.32 mt under the NFSA & regular schemes
- 31.32 mt under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana(PMGKAY) in the wake of the COVID-19 induced lockdown.

- And the total grain channeled through the public distribution system (PDS) in 2020-21 was nearly 50% higher than in normal years.
- 2020-21 also saw exports of 19.81 mt valued at \$ 9.86 billion.
- While rice exports were at an all-time high with 13.09 mt non-basmati & 4.63 mt basmati.
- Wheat was also the highest since 2014-15 with 2.09 mt exports.
- These twin records- exporting approx. 20 mt of grain & also distributing 92 mt under different schemes is a remarkable story of surplus production & stocks in public warehouses.
- This also ensured no mass starvation in India's worst pandemic since 1918 Spanish flu, the 1943 Bengal & Travancore famines.
- At present, even after the unprecedented off take of grain, the central pool stood above the required minimum buffer of 21.04 mt.

Why exports hit a record high?

- The exports have been surging mainly on the back of international prices.
- The UNFAO's global cereal price index is currently ruling at its highest since 2014.
- The increase in world prices has made exports from India a viable proposition.



Wheat's Case:

- Indian wheat is being offered at \$280-285 per tonne free-on-board, which is more than the govt's MSP of Rs 1975, that is fairly competitive vis-à-vis Australia & the US.
- Wheat sourced from Gujarat, MP, or Rajasthan at below MSP can be easily exported today.

Rice's Case:

- The below-MSP sourcing for exports would be all the more in the case of rice.
- At the MSP of Rs 1868/quintal for common paddy, the equivalent price of milled rice will be around Rs 28000 or \$ 382 per tonne.
- This is more than the \$360/tonne rates at which white non-basmati rice is being shipped.
- Similar to Wheat, Indian white rice is very competitive relative to Thailand & Vietnam.

Cyclone Tauktae: 'Very severe' cyclonic storm to reach Gujarat coast on 17 May evening, says IMD

Syllabus - GS 3: Disaster Management

Analysis: -

- Gale-force winds, heavy rainfall and high tidal waves swept the coastal belt of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa as Cyclone Tauktae hurtled northwards towards Gujarat on Sunday, leaving six people dead, damaging hundreds of houses, uprooting electricity poles and trees and forcing evacuation in low-lying areas.

- Mumbai is expected to see heavy rainfall today. In view of the storm, the city has shifted over 500 Covid patients from its jumbo centres.
- The cyclone is expected to cause heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of Gujarat. Extremely heavy rainfall is predicted in Junagadh and Gir Somnath and heavy to very heavy rain at a few places in the districts of Saurashtra, Kutch and Diu, namely Gir Somnath, Diu, Junagadh, Porbandar, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Amreli, Rajkot, and Jamnagar.
- The Very Severe Cyclonic Storm "Tauktae" (pronounced as Tau'Te) over east central Arabian Sea moved nearly northwards with a speed of about 11 kmph during past 06 hours and lay centred at 0530 hours IST of today, the 16th May, 2021 over east central Arabian Sea near latitude 15.0°N and longitude 72.7°E, about 130 km west-southwest of Panjim-Goa, 450 km south of Mumbai, 700 km south-southeast of Veraval (Gujarat) and 840 km southeast of Karachi (Pakistan).

Mains Analysis

It is getting from bad to worse for women workers

Why in News?

The COVID-19 pandemic has destroyed millions of livelihoods and led to a sudden women worker, in particular, have borne a disproportionate burden.

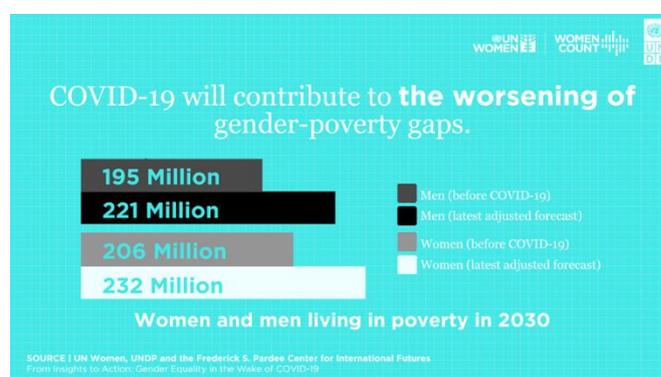
Syllabus-- GS 1: Role of Women/ GS 3 Inclusive growth

A widening gap

- Gender employment gap is large in India. Only 18% of working-age women were employed as compared to 75% of men.
- Reasons include a lack of good jobs, restrictive social norms, and the burden of household work.
- According to the report, 'State of Working India 2021: One Year of Covid-19' the pandemic has worsened the situation.
- Data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd. show that 61% of male workers were unaffected during the lockdown while only 19% of women experienced this kind of security.
- Even by the end of the year, 47% of employed women who had lost jobs during the lockdown, had not returned to work. The equivalent number for men was only 7%.
- Men were able to regain the jobs even though at lower prices but in the case of women.
- From the data available around 33% of formal salaried men moved into self-

employment and 9% into daily wage work between late 2019 and late 2020.

- Whereas women had far fewer options — only 4% and 3% of formal salaried women moved into self-employment and daily wage work, respectively.
- Nearly 50 percent of women withdrew from the workforce as compared to just 7 percent of men. Also women had less avenues for self-employment and were forced to settle for daily wage labourers.
- Women tended to lose work disproportionately irrespective of the industry in which they were employed.
- For instance, the share of women in job losses in education was three times their share in that industry. This is also evident from health sector.



A widening gap

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- Our recently released report, State of Working India 2021: One Year of Covid-19

shows that the pandemic has worsened the situation.

Gender gap in India: -

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Growing domestic work

- The household responsibilities increased for women with the closure of schools and workplaces.
- The India Working Survey 2020 found that among employed men, the number of hours spent on paid work remained more or less unchanged after the pandemic. But for women, the number of hours spent in domestic work increased manifold.
- This increase in hours came without any accompanying relief in the hours spent on paid work.

The course to take

- The following measures are needed now: expansion of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the introduction of an urban employment guarantee targeted to women as soon as the most severe forms of mobility restrictions are lifted.
- Co-ordinated efforts by States to facilitate employment of women while also addressing immediate needs through the setting up of community kitchens,

prioritising the opening of schools and anganwadi centres, and engagement with self-help groups for the production of personal protective equipment kits.

- COVID-19 hardship allowance of at least Rs 5,000 per month for six months should be announced for 2.5 million accredited social health activists and Anganwadi workers, most of whom are women.
- The National Employment Policy, should systematically address the constraints around the participation of the women's workforce, both with respect to the availability of work and household responsibilities.

Impact on Livelihoods and Economic Slowdown

- The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown restrictions caused unprecedented job losses.
- The quantity and quality of employment opportunities both deteriorated and are estimated to not have returned anywhere close to the pre-pandemic numbers yet.
- Amit Basole (2021) wrote:

Many surveys investigating the COVID-19 impact on vulnerable workers, including ours, have shown that around 60%–80% of workers (self-employed, casual as well as salaried workers without job security) lost employment during the lockdown in April and May 2020.

The CMIE data show that the lockdown affected around 43% of the national workforce.

Even as late as December 2020, both CMIE data and our survey showed that 20% of those who lost work during the lockdown were unemployed (Abraham and Basole 2021; Nath et al 2021). Women and younger workers were much more likely to lose their jobs and less likely to recover (Abraham et al 2021).

There was also an increase in informality during this period, with previously salaried workers returning to the labour market as self-employed or casual workers (Abraham and Basole 2021).

Way Forward: -

- Universal basic services programme that fills existing vacancies in the social sector but also expands public investments in health, education, child and elderly care can be implemented.
- These measures can help bring women into the workforce not only by directly creating employment for them but also by alleviating some of their domestic work burdens, while also overcoming nutritional and educational deficits.

Quotes: -

"For millions of workers, no income means no food, no security and no future. As the pandemic and the jobs crisis evolve, the need to protect the most vulnerable becomes even more urgent." -- Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General

Question: -

Women who are poor and marginalized face an even higher risk of COVID-19 transmission and fatalities, loss of livelihood, and increased violence. Discuss.

Can a single Lightning flash kill 18 elephants? Science says yes, in various ways

Why in News?

On Wednesday, 18 elephants died on a hilltop in Assam, the preliminary report indicate the cause of death is struck by lightning.

Syllabus-- GS3: Environmental Issues

How does lightning kill animals?

- Lightning can damage or kill animals in a number of ways, physicist and engineer Chandima Gomes wrote in the International Journal of Biometeorology in 2012.
- In an email to The Indian Express, Gomes, now professor of high-voltage engineering at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, listed some of these ways, including:
 - **Direct flash:** An animal in an open field can be struck directly by lightning if part of its body protrudes above other nearby objects. Higher animals are more vulnerable.
 - **Side flash:** When lightning strikes a tall object such as a tree, it can generate a side shot that can hit an animal standing under the tree.
 - **Touch potential:** If one part of a tall animal's body is in contact with the ground while another part, at a higher elevation,

comes in contact with a lightning-struck object, a partial current may pass through its body.

- **Step potential:** The most common lightning hazard among four-legged animals. When an animal's front & hind feet are far enough apart, a partial current may pass through the body in certain circumstances.

What could have happened in Assam's case?

- According to the preliminary team, the elephants may have killed due to Step Potential lightning.
- When current flows through the ground following a lightning strike, the electric potential is highest at the strike point & decreases with the distance along the direction of the flow.
- If an elephant is facing the strike point, the current will flow from the front feet to the hind feet, electrocuting it in the process.

Are elephants particularly vulnerable?

- Since an elephant's front & hind feet are wide apart, it would appear to make it more vulnerable than a smaller animal.
- Increasing distances between two feet increase the potential difference which in turn allows greater current through the body.
- Elephants are in need more vulnerable because of their height which was also observed in Giraffe's death by lightning.
- The chances of getting directly struck by lightning highly depend on the vicinity.
- The tallest objects in the vicinity attract lightning.

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- So if there are tall trees higher than the elephants, the chance that lightning strikes them directly is not big.
 - But if they are in open grass field the chances are bigger.

Question: -

Enlist the causes behind the increasing deaths of animals in recent times. What are the environmental consequences?