

# **The Hindu**

## **Front Page**

### **Retail inflation eases to 7.04% in May (Page no. 1)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)**

India's retail inflation eased marginally to 7.04% in May from the nearly eight-year high of 7.79% in April, reflecting a persistent uptick of over 6% in prices paid by consumers for the fifth successive month.

Inflation faced by rural consumers fell to 7.01% in May from 8.38% in April, but for households in urban areas, the pace of price rise was virtually flat month-on-month, moving from 7.09% in April to 7.08% in May.

Food price inflation, which had hit a 17-month high of 8.31% in April, eased a little to 7.97% in May, thanks to a decline in rural food inflation to 7.76% from 8.5%.

However, the Consumer Food Price Index surged for urban India to 8.2% in May from 8.09% in April.

A sharp rise in tomato prices, along with hardening potato prices, raised the inflation in vegetables, even as wheat and rice prices climbed to keep cereals inflation elevated. CARE Ratings said food remained the main inflation driver, with a nearly 50% contribution.

## **States**

### **'Governors should act impartially' (Page no. 4)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker M. Appavu said Governors "should act impartially as the head of the State in terms of the Constitution", as they played an important part in conveying the collective opinion of the legislature along with their "just recommendations".

He also took objection to the Union government 'infringing' on the domain of the State legislature, disregarding the collective opinion of the House.

During his speech in a meeting of the Committee of Presiding Officers in Delhi, which was held to suggest criteria for the Outstanding Legislative Council/ Assembly Award, Mr. Appavu said, "There is potential for conflict when there is no harmony between the Union and the States, and especially when the Union, without consensus or consultation, infringes on the legislative domain of the State legislature or disregards the collective opinion of the State Legislative Assembly expressed in the form of bills/resolutions."

Citing debates in the media over the Union government asserting itself forcefully, against the wishes of the States, in matters of legislation, Mr. Appavu said: "The Governor of the State plays an important part in conveying the collective opinion of the legislature along with his just recommendations."

The Governor should act impartially as the head of the State in terms of the Constitution. How the legislature fights for protecting the State's rights may also be considered as one of the criteria while selecting the best legislature."

## **Editorial**

### **Tackling the crisis of rising global food prices (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)**

Global food prices are characterised by year-to-year volatility and periodic sharp spikes. While year-to-year volatility is easily managed by most countries through changes in their trade and domestic policies, it is steep and severe periodic price shocks that can lead to some sort of a crisis at the global and national levels.

The crisis can emerge in the form of food shortages, trade disruptions, a rise and spread in hunger and poverty levels, a depletion of foreign exchange reserves for net food importing countries, a strain on a nation's fiscal resources due to an increase in spending on food safety nets, a threat to peace, and even social unrest in some places.

Because of these widespread ramifications of food price shocks, it becomes imperative to understand the real causes of such shocks and devise effective mechanisms to deal with them.

Historical data on food prices compiled by international agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Bank/International Monetary Fund show that since the onset and the adoption of Green Revolution technology in the early 1960s, the world has been struck thrice by food price crises.

The first shock was experienced during 1973-76 when the food price index (based on prices in U.S. dollars) doubled in nominal terms and increased by one third in real terms compared to the preshock average of four years.

This shock moved up the nominal prices of commodities (including food) into a new trajectory. However, for the next two decades, food prices in real terms followed a declining trend and were at their lowest around 2002.

### **The influenza pandemic and ‘nations within a nation’ (Page no. 6) (GS Paper 2, Health)**

Few questions in business and public policy are as complex as the question of how to save lives. Lives matter, not only of those who are fortunate to live in more developed regions, but also of those who live in less developed regions. Many governments around the world struggle to address the problem of inequity in access to life-saving products such as vaccines.

The struggle becomes even more complex when there is a sudden increase in demand for such life-saving products, for example, during a pandemic.

When there is a sudden increase in demand for life-saving products (e.g., flu vaccines during the 2009-10 H1N1 pandemic), how do firms respond across the more versus less developed regions within a nation? Why might foreign incumbents and rival domestic firms respond differently?

To answer such intricate questions, it is crucial to first understand the sources of competitive advantage under normal conditions, i.e., in the absence of the pandemic.

Product demand is central to the development of capabilities and the resources of firms as it incentivises their engagement in the high-fixed-cost research and development activities required to produce life-saving products such as vaccines.

## **OPED**

### **Environmental governance at centre stage (Page no. 7) (GS Paper 3, Environment)**

It was the noted Pakistani economist, Tariq Banuri, who, in the runup to the ill-fated Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change in December 2009, first pointed to me that the global environmental discourse has been shaped by four events. The first three were the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* in 1968, and the Club of Rome’s *The Limits to Growth* in early 1972.

The fourth was Indira Gandhi’s speech at the first-ever United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm 50 years ago today. She was the only head of government to speak at that conclave (other than the host, Olof Palme).

Her address, which looked at environmental issues from a development perspective and at developmental challenges from an ecological standpoint, has gone into history as a milestone.

A naturalist Indira Gandhi had already established her credentials as a naturalist when she spoke at Stockholm. She had reactivated the Indian Board of Wildlife in July 1969 and had hosted the Tenth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature five months later.

She had started paying attention to protecting sanctuaries and in 1971, had deputed the famed ornithologist Salim Ali to Ramsar, the Caspian Sea site in Iran where the convention to protect wetlands was finalised.

The National Committee on Environmental Planning and Coordination had been established under the stewardship of the redoubtable Pitambar Pant.

She had launched India’s first species conservation programme at Gir for the Asiatic Lion in January 1972 and had started preparations for Project Tiger, which came into being in April 1973.

## **Text and Context**

### **Demolition drives violate international law (Page no. 9) (GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

In the context of the Uttar Pradesh government bulldozing ‘illegal properties’ of protestors who took to the streets to condemn the comments made by erstwhile BJP spokespersons, this article dated April 20, 2022 by Prabhash Ranjan and Aman Kumar explains how arbitrary destruction and eviction of houses are against international laws.

Communal clashes broke out during Ram Navami processions in several parts of the country including at Khargone in Madhya Pradesh.

Subsequently, the Madhya Pradesh government bulldozed the houses of those who were allegedly involved in rioting. The State government claims that these demolitions are in response to illegal encroachments. However, the fact that

these arbitrary demolitions are being carried out against the alleged rioters of one particular community and in the immediate aftermath of the riots shows that their purpose seems to be to impose collective punishment.

The bulldozing machines— the new symbols of brute state power — are not just demolishing houses and shops but also bulldozing rule of law and our constitutional order.

This idea of serving ‘justice’, quick and cold, through bulldozers emanated in Uttar Pradesh. In the wake of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 the Uttar Pradesh government passed orders to recover damages from those who were allegedly involved in destroying public property.

This process has been further institutionalized through the enactment of the Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act, 2020.

## **News**

### **Centre to boost supply of fortified rice (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)**

Union Food and Public Distribution Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said that the Centre had started the second phase of distribution of fortified rice from April 1.

A total of 90 districts have been covered, and the Centre is targeting 291 districts. The pet scheme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, started in October 2021, aims to supply fortified rice to beneficiaries of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman, or PM-POSHAN, scheme.

Asked about the health risks involved in the consumption of fortified rice, which has added nutrients, and the warnings experts had given to the Centre against such a scheme, Mr. Pandey said the benefits far outweighed the harmful effects. He added that a comprehensive concurrent evaluation mechanism had been put in place. All States have set up a steering committee headed by the Chief Secretary that will review the whole distribution. The State medical departments and ground functionaries are generally aware of pockets of diseases.

### **India is expanding its nuclear arsenal: SIPRI (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relation)**

India had 160 nuclear warheads as on January 2022 and it appears to be expanding its nuclear arsenal, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a defence think tank.

Similarly, Pakistan also appears to be expanding its nuclear arsenal, the SIPRI said in a statement.

Chinese expansion “China is in the middle of a substantial expansion of its nuclear weapon arsenal, which satellite images indicate includes the construction of over 300 new missile silos”. China had 350 nuclear warheads in January 2021 and 2022.

### **New norms for sentence remission (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

The Union Home Ministry issued a set of guidelines to the States and the Union Territories on the grant of special remission to prisoners to commemorate the 75th year of Independence.

As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, the special remission would be granted to a certain category of prisoners, and they would be released in three phases — August 15, 2022, January 26, 2023 and August 15, 2023.

The prisoners who would qualify for premature release under the scheme are women and transgender convicts of ages 50 and above and male convicts of 60 and above who have completed 50% of their total sentence period without counting the period of general remission earned.

Among others eligible for remission are physically challenged or disabled convicts with 70% disability and more who have completed 50% of their total sentence period, terminally ill convicts, convicted prisoners who have completed two-thirds (66%) of their total sentence and poor or indigent prisoners who have completed their sentence but are still in jail due to nonpayment of fine imposed on them by waiving off the fine.