

The Hindu

Front Page

Services rule out rollback of Agnipath, reveal hiring plan (Page no. 1)

(GS Paper 3, Defence)

Terming Agnipath the “only progressive step” to make the Army younger, a senior military officer on Sunday ruled out any rollback of the scheme, and said those applying for it should give an undertaking that they did not take part in protests that broke out after its announcement.

The three Services announced the recruitment schedule for the first batch of Agniveers with training set to commence by 2022end.

There is no space for indiscipline in the armed forces. No space for arson and vandalism. Every individual who aspires to join Agnipath has to give an undertaking and pledge that they have not taken part in any protest or arson. There will be police verification after that.

No one can come into the armed forces without police verification,” Lieutenant General Anil Puri, Additional Secretary in the Department of Military Affairs, said at a tri service press conference after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met the three Service chiefs for the second consecutive day.

Lt. Gen. Puri said efforts to bring down the average age of the armed forces started three decades ago. The Kargil review committee had reiterated the need for a reduction in age, but it did not come about, he added.

India has really helped us during this crisis, says Ranil (Page no. 1)

(GS Paper 2, International Relation)

India has “really helped” Sri Lanka in its efforts to cope with the economic crash, the nation’s Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, said, however, observing that aid coming in from different sources has put it “in the middle of geopolitics”.

Over a month after his unexpected appointment, Mr. Wickremesinghe spoke to The Hindu in his Colombo office on Saturday.

The six-time premier sounded upbeat in possibly the toughest assignment of his career. “It’s hectic, this is a new experience.

I am working eight days a week,” he laughed. Outlining his plans for economic recovery, the 73yearold Prime Minister said the government hopes to firm up the staff level agreement with the International Monetary Fund by Juneend.

Then we have to wait for the debt-restructuring plan. That will give us a clear indication of what we have to do. By July, I also hope to bring the interim Budget, Mr. Wickremesinghe said.

Editorial

The EPI may rankle but India can recast policies (Page no. 6)

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

For a government acutely sensitive to global rankings, the latest Environmental Performance Index (EPI) placing India last among all 180 assessed countries has naturally touched a raw nerve.

The assessment, carried out by Yale and Columbia Universities with an emphasis on climate change mitigation, has become controversial for prioritising the flow of greenhouse gases from countries while reducing the emphasis on the stock of carbon dioxide from industrialised countries that is warming the globe.

Evidently, if countries were assigned a penalty for the stock of CO₂ in the atmosphere, rather than measure their mitigation actions over a decade, India would fare much better.

Less controversially, the EPI dwells on performance on air quality, waste management and ecological conservation measures.

Unsurprisingly, the EPI ranking and scores have been rejected by the Union Government as based on “unfounded assumptions”, “surmises” and “unscientific methods.”

The national rank of 165 on Climate Policy and score of 21.7 in this category — which overall has a 38% weightage in the calculations along with 42% for Ecosystem Vitality and 20% for Environmental Health — has particular significance. India is under pressure to raise its ambition and commitment towards the more ambitious 1.5° Centigrade goal for temperature rise under the Paris Agreement, going beyond the less rigorous target of well below 2°C.

Revisiting social justice under the Dravidian model (Page no. 6)

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu has played a significant role in democratizing the public space for wider participation. As emphasised by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.K. Stalin recently, social justice has been the integral part of the Dravidian development model.

Social justice principles in Tamil Nadu were initially emphasized and propagated by Periyar, who fought for community based representation while fighting the evils of the caste system.

Even though the Dravidian social justice model was able to democratise the public sphere by opening the space in education and employment, there is a need to revisit many aspects of social justice to reach out and benefit more people. The report of the first Backward Classes (BC) Commission, headed by A.N. Sattanathan, appointed by then Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, in its report submitted in 1970 highlighted the unequal distribution of reservation benefits in favour of certain communities within backward castes.

It further stated that around nine castes (that accounted for 11.3% of the total backward castes) held 48% of gazetted posts and 37% of nongazetted posts.

In the education sector, it was 47% of medical seats, 44% of engineering seats and 34% of scholarships denying an opportunity for the remaining 88.7% of backward castes in Tamil Nadu.

Even though the Sattanathan commission had recommended economic criteria and taking out certain castes out of reservation benefits, due to political and electoral reasons, the government increased the quota for Other Backward Classes (OBC) from 25% to 31% and for Scheduled Castes (SC)/ Scheduled Tribes (ST) from 16% to 18%.

OPED

Recognising the ‘compulsory’ woman worker (Page no. 7)

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reported that the labour participation rate of rural women was 9.92% in March 2022 compared to 67.24% for men.

This is a cause for concern. According to CMIE, millions who left the labour market stopped looking for employment “possibly [because they were] too disappointed with their failure to get a job and under the belief that there were no jobs available”.

In countries like the U.S., Canada and Australia, such workers who are willing to work but give up searching for work for various reasons are called ‘discouraged workers’ and they are included in the unemployed category.

This phenomenon, not captured in India by any official labour force surveys, is wrongly described as women “dropping out” or “leaving the labour market” giving the impression that this was a choice made by them, whereas, actually, women are pushed out of employment.

The CMIE provides valuable inputs for urgently required government intervention in rural India. Groundlevel realities are worse than what the CMIE suggests and what the government denies.

Women who belong to landless households or with meagre landholdings cannot afford the luxury of being “discouraged.” These are the “compulsory” workers.

Petty patents can boost R&D (Page no. 7)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

Innovative activity is the key driver of competitiveness and economic growth. In that context, India’s rank of 46 in WIPO’s Global Innovation Index (GII) 2021, up from 81 in 2015, is encouraging.

This finding corroborates an earlier one by UNCTAD in its Digital Economy Report 2021 where India was seen as exceeding expectations.

While these findings are encouraging, India, which aspires to emerge as one of the largest economies of the world, needs to move up further in the innovation rankings, for building selfreliance in technology, especially in the context of the incipient digital revolution.

China occupies the 12th rank in GII, ahead of Japan at 13th. This shows that it is possible to move up the ladder with sustained effort.

India has much room for enhancing its innovative activity. Among the key indicators, gross R&D expenditure (GERD) as a percentage of GDP at 0.7% is low.

It needs to rise to upwards of 2% of GDP, as in the leading innovative nations. Furthermore, only about 30% of the GERD is spent by business enterprises, despite the generous tax incentives offered by the government.

This suggests that Indian enterprises have not got into an R&D culture, not to talk of innovative rivalry. The bulk of innovative activity is conducted by a handful of companies in the pharma and auto sectors.

Explainer

Indian interests at the WTO Ministerial Conference (Page no. 8) (GS Paper 2, International Relation)

On June 17, member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) wrapped up the Ministerial Conference's twelfth outing (MC12) securing agreements on relaxing patent regulations to achieve global vaccine equity; ensuring food security, according subsidies to the fisheries sector and continuing moratoriums relevant to ecommerce, among others. Together they constitute what WTO's Director General Ngozi OkonjoIweala referred to as the "Geneva Package." India saw some successes at the MC12 with respect to the above mentioned sectors.

The MC is at the very top of WTO's organisational chart. It meets once every two years and can take decisions on all matters under any multilateral trade agreement.

Unlike other organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund or World Bank, WTO does not delegate power to a board of directors or an organisational chief.

All decisions at the WTO are made collectively and through consensus among member countries at varied councils and committees. This year's confer place in Geneva, Switzerland.

Auctioning 5G spectrum bands (Page no. 8) (GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gave its nod for the auction of spectrum that can be used to offer 5G services, at its meeting held on June 14.

A total of 72,097.85 MHz (or 72 Ghz) of spectrum with a validity period of 20 years will be put on sale during the auction planned towards the end of July.

The auction will be held for spectrum in various Low (600 MHz, 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz), Mid (3300 MHz) and High (26 GHz) frequency bands.

It is expected that the Mid and High band spectrum will be utilised by telecom service providers (TSPs) to rollout 5G services wherein speeds would be 10 times higher than what is possible through the current 4G services.

This follows the Budget 2022 announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that the government would auction telecom spectrum in 2022, which will enable private players to roll out 5G services before March 2023.

The auctions are scheduled to commence from July 26. The Department of Telecom has invited applications from prospective bidders to participate in the auctions.

Based on the applications, the government will prequalify applicants who meet the eligibility criteria.

News

'India, Bangladesh should work on river management (Page no. 12) (GS Paper 2, International Relation)

India and Bangladesh should work together for comprehensive management of rivers, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said.

Delivering opening remarks at the seventh round of India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission, Mr. Jaishankar welcomed his counterpart A.K. Abdul Momen and extended India's assistance in management of the annual flood in Bangladesh.

He said the Indian side wished to work with Bangladesh on Artificial Intelligence, startups, fintech and cybersecurity. "We would also like to convey our support and solidarity at the unprecedented flooding that we have had in northern Bangladesh. We have also had in the northeast.

We are now sharing flood management data for an extended period. I would like to take the opportunity to convey that if in any concrete way, we can be of assistance to you in the management of flood and relief efforts, we would be very glad to be supportive," said Mr. Jaishankar.