

The Indian Express

Front Page

I-T flagged ‘misreporting’ of Rs 1.06-cr, black money SIT judge opted for amnesty scheme (Page no. 1) (GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

Former Supreme Court judge, Justice Arijit Pasayat, Deputy Chairman of the two-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) on black money, is one of those who availed of the Government’s amnesty scheme after Income Tax authorities flagged alleged misreporting of income by him.

It was in November 2020, a year after he received an order from the Cuttack unit of the Income Tax Department for allegedly misreporting his income for 2017-18 to the extent of Rs 1.06 crore, that Justice Pasayat availed of the Government’s amnesty scheme.

The scheme, mounted after introduction of the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Act 2020, was extended to 2021 and is simply called the VSV Scheme.

Its short title describes it as a scheme for “resolution of disputed tax” and its Section 6 elaborates that those who avail of it get immunity from proceedings in respect of the “offence.”

10 lakh Govt jobs in mission mode, in 18 months: PMO (Page no. 1) (GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

With the youth unemployment rate in cities hovering above 20 per cent, the government Tuesday announced it would recruit 10 lakh people in “mission mode” over the next one-and-a-half years.

In a statement, the Prime Minister’s Office said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi “reviewed the status of Human Resources in all departments and ministries.”

Shri Modi’s directive to make 10 lakh recruitment in mission mode in all government departments and ministries in 1.5 years will bring new hope and confidence among the youth.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar described the announcement as a “historic decision” and said it is in the “interest of the youth.”

He said that in compliance with the instructions of the PM, directions have been given to fill up all vacant posts under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare at the earliest.

Major shift in soldier recruitment: 4-year stint under Agnipath (Page no. 1) (GS Paper 3, Defence)

Unveiling Agnipath, a “major defence policy reform” for recruitment of soldiers, sailors and airmen into the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, the government announced that personnel recruited under the scheme on short-term contractual basis will be called Agniveers.

The scheme, the government said, comes into effect immediately and will create “a much more youthful and technically adept war fighting force by ensuring a fine balance between youthful and experienced personnel” in the armed forces.

The Agnipath scheme — it had earlier been proposed as Tour of Duty — is expected to make the permanent force levels leaner in the over 13-lakh strong armed forces.

Under the scheme, most soldiers will leave the service in just four years. Of the 45,000 to 50,000 recruited annually, only 25 per cent will be allowed to continue for another 15 years under permanent commission. This will considerably reduce the defence pension bill which has been a major concern of governments for many years.

India, Israel, US, UAE are I2U2, summit next month (Page no. 1) (GS Paper 2, International Relation)

US President Joe Biden will host a virtual summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Israel Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan during his visit to West Asia from July 13 to 16.

A senior US administration official told reporters in a background call Tuesday that the new grouping will be called “I2U2” — “I” for India and Israel and “U” for the US and UAE.

In October 2021, a meeting of the foreign ministers of the four countries took place when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was visiting Israel.

At that time, it was called the 'International Forum for Economic Cooperation'. This time, the meeting will take place at the level of heads of government/state — an upgrade.

Editorial Page

A reform called Agnipath (Page no. 10)

(GS Paper 3, Defence)

In recent years, the Narendra Modi government has given special attention to defence and national security by taking meaningful steps to enable the Indian armed forces to evolve rapidly into a modern fighting force with cutting edge technologies.

The Government of India's announcement of the Agnipath scheme for recruitment of soldiers, the majority of whom will serve for four years, is another step in the right direction.

The proposal entails recruitment of Agniveers, 17.5 to 21 years old, for all the three services, based on "All India All Class (AIAC)" from recognised technical institutes like the Industrial Training Institutes through a centralised online system with specialised rallies and campus interviews.

Medical eligibility and rigorous training standards will be maintained and their selection will be the exclusive domain of the armed forces.

The best among the Agniveers, upto 25 per cent in each batch, will be selected for regular cadre to serve for another minimum of 15 years, based on a transparent and merit-based assessment.

Idea Page

The RBI's misdiagnosis (Page no. 11)

(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

Central banks have it easy when inflation is low because then they can provide ample liquidity at low interest rates, pleasing the nation's borrowers.

Their mettle is tested only when inflation rises, requiring them to take unpopular measures. So far, the RBI has been failing this test and that too on its core mandate.

Start with the data. The recent upsurge in food and fuel prices has given the impression that India has simply been a victim of global circumstances, a casualty of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But India's inflation problem began long before the war started. As the chart shows, monthly inflation has been above the RBI's 4 per cent target since October 2019.

In other words, for nearly three years the inflation target has been honoured only in the breach. Indeed, for 18 out of 32 months since October 2019 (56 per cent of the time), inflation has even been above the RBI's ceiling of 6 per cent.

Yet for most of this period, the RBI did not react at all. If the US Fed and the European Central Bank (ECB) have been behind the curve for about a year, the RBI has been further behind, for longer.

Even now, it is not leaning hard against inflation, but remains in "accommodative" mode, reflected in the striking fact that real policy rates are negative (minus 2-3 per cent) so late into a high inflation episode.

The Expansion game (Page no. 11)

(GS Paper 2, International Relation)

A virtual meeting of BRICS+ foreign ministers was held on May 20 in which the ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) were joined by representatives from Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Thailand.

Russia and China have decided that this is an opportune time to expand BRICS and challenge the domain of the G7 by including members from the G20.

The convulsions in the international order, heightened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the hardening of Western positions, are leading to the making of competitive plurilateral fora.

Efforts to disrupt the G20 may not entirely succeed with Indonesia holding firm on inviting Russia, but the cracks in the G20 are looming.

The strengthening of plurilateral bodies is now in fashion. China is challenging Western influence over countries and wants to use BRICS to that end.

Established in 2006, BRIC graduated to a summit in 2009. Since India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) summits were held alongside, South Africa became a logical member of BRICS in 2011.

China made it appear that it was the creator of the consensus to admit South Africa when India was the key force behind this decision.

Economy

Over 84 percent of ‘temporary visitors’ moved due to Covid linked factors (Page no. 13) (GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, 0.7 per cent of the country’s population was a ‘temporary visitor’ in households during July 2020-June 2021, a report named ‘Migration in India 2020-21’, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Over 84 per cent of these ‘temporary visitors’ — categorised as those who arrived after March 2020 and stayed in the household continuously for a period of 15 days or more but less than 6 months — moved places for reasons linked to the pandemic — ranging from meeting family/relatives/friends, loss of job/closure of unit/lack of employment opportunities, migration of earning member, closure of educational institutions and health related reasons, it showed.

A total of 48.9 per cent of the ‘temporary visitors’ moved to meet family/relatives/friends during July 2020-June 2021, while 15.7 per cent of such temporary visitors moved for health-related reasons and 12.2 per cent moved for loss of job/closure of unit/lack of employment opportunities, the findings of the report showed.

The ‘Migration in India’ report, which is based on first-time collection of additional data during the annual round of Periodic Labour Force Survey for July 2020-June 2021, separates the categories of ‘temporary visitors’ and ‘migrants’.

Two states walk out of NPS (Page no. 13) (GS Paper 2, Governance)

The National Pension System (NPS), managed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and designed to unburden the Central government and state governments of huge future pension liabilities, has received a setback as two states, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, have walked out of the system after participating in it for the last few years.

Sources confirmed that both the states, ruled by the Congress, have stopped contributing any funds from their side to the NPS since April 1. “Yes, both the governments have stopped the payment.

Now, whatever the funds they had contributed earlier will be taken care of by us,” said an official, adding that there are no legal ways through which the PFRDA can return the funds whatever have been contributed by these two states.

All other states except Tamil Nadu and West Bengal had participated in the NPS and the last state that had joined the NPS was Tripura.

Explained Page

What is in Agnipath scheme (Page no. 14) (GS Paper 3, Defence)

The government unveiled its new Agnipath scheme for recruiting soldiers across the three services. The new defence recruitment reform, which has been cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security, will come into effect immediately, and the soldiers recruited under the scheme will be called Agniveers.

Under the new scheme, around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, and most will leave the service in just four years.

Of the total annual recruits, only 25 per cent will be allowed to continue for another 15 years under permanent commission.

The move will make the permanent force levels much leaner for the over 13-lakh strong armed forces in the country.

This will, in turn, considerably reduce the defence pension bill, which has been a major concern for governments for many years.

The new system is only for personnel below officer ranks (those who do not join the forces as commissioned officers).

Under the Agnipath scheme, aspirants between the ages of 17.5 years and 21 years will be eligible to apply. The recruitment standards will remain the same, and recruitment will be done twice a year through rallies.

The Significance of holy relics of Buddha, sent on exposition to Mongolia (Page no. 14) (GS Paper 1, Culture)

Four Holy Relics of Lord Buddha are being taken to Mongolia for an 11-day exposition to coincide with Mongolian Buddha Purnima celebrations.

A 25-member delegation, led by Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju, will accompany the relics on their onward journey on Monday, to be displayed at the Batsagaan Temple in Gandan Monastery complex in Ulaanbaatar.

The four relics come from among 22 Buddha relics, currently housed at Delhi's National Museum. Together, they are known as the 'Kapilvastu Relics' since they are from a site in Bihar believed to be the ancient city of Kapilvastu.

At the age of 80, according to Buddhist beliefs, Buddha attained salvation in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district. The Mallas of Kushinagar cremated his body with ceremonies befitting a universal king.

His relics from the funeral pyre were collected and divided into eight shares to be distributed among the Ajathsatrus of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vaishali, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Mallas of Kushinagar, Bullies of Allakappa, the Mallas of Pava, the Koliyas of Ramagrama and a Brahmana of Vethadipa.

The purpose was erecting stupas over the sacred relics. Two more stupas came up — one over the urn in which the relics had been collected and the other over the embers.