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FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

Even as unemployment falls, lack of 'decent work' in India

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Why in Focus?

- India's **unemployment rate declined from 6.1% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2023-24**. **Female workforce participation has also increased.**
- However, the **key question** is whether the jobs created provide workers with **decent wages, job security, social security and dignity.**

Key Highlights:

- **Decent Work** is defined by the ILO as employment offering equitable income, workplace rights, social security, and dignity.

Decent Work Index (DWI) measures employment quality based on status, opportunity, and social security.

- **India's DWI** increased from **0.247 in 2017-18** to **0.302 in 2023-24**, indicating some improvement but remaining low.
- **Manufacturing** and **transport sectors** showed the highest improvement in DWI, with increases from **0.324 to 0.411** and **0.285 to 0.35** respectively.
- **Agriculture** remains the lowest-quality employment sector, with a DWI increase from **0.211 to 0.267**.
- Nearly **90% of India's workforce** remains **informally employed**, a share that has risen since 2019.
- **Women from Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes** experienced a decline in decent-work outcomes between **2017-18 and 2023-24**.
- States like **Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Haryana** perform better in decent-work creation compared to **Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- The **four Labour Codes** introduced in **2025** aim to simplify labour regulation and expand protections.
- Construction and retail workers largely depend on **temporary jobs, subcontracting and insecure employment.**
- **Informal employment is also increasing in organised industries** through outsourcing, contract-based jobs and gig work.

Implications:

- **Employment alone does not ensure dignity or security**; many workers lack formal contracts and social security, failing to meet **decent work** criteria.

- **Informality in employment depresses productivity**, increases inequality, and weakens economic resilience.
- **Regional disparities in decent work creation** highlight uneven progress, with some states lagging significantly.
- **The intersection of caste and gender disadvantages** worsens decent-work outcomes for marginalized women, exacerbating social inequalities.

Way Forward:

- **Extend social protection to all workers**, including gig and platform workers, through accessible systems like **e-Shram**.
- **Ensure that formalisation policies improve labour conditions** and require businesses to provide basic worker protections.
- **Implement intersectional labour policies** to address specific needs of marginalized groups, including childcare and skill training.
- **Prioritize worker needs in labour reforms**, ensuring that the **four Labour Codes** effectively expand protections.

Mains Question:

Despite falling unemployment, India faces challenges in ensuring decent work. Examine the causes and implications of poor job quality and suggest measures for quality and equitable employment. (250 Words)

Why even a strong El Niño does not guarantee a poor Indian monsoon

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- **India's 2026 southwest monsoon ended with 13% below-normal rainfall**, making it a deficient monsoon. The major reason was the strong El Niño, which generally **weakens the Indian monsoon.**
- However, in 1997, **despite a similarly strong El Niño, India received normal rainfall**. This raises an important question: **Why did El Niño affect India's monsoon differently in different years?**

Key Highlights:

- **El Niño and Indian monsoon**: **Normally, trade winds push warm Pacific Ocean water towards Indonesia**, where warm air rises and produces rainfall.
- During El Niño, these **winds weaken and warm water moves towards South America.**
- **This changes atmospheric circulation, causing air to descend over parts of India.**
- The **descending air becomes warmer and drier**, reducing cloud formation and monsoon rainfall.
- **Despite strong El Niño conditions**, **India received normal rainfall in 1997**, while rainfall was around **13% below normal in 2015 and 2026.**
- **In 1997**, a **positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** helped **compensate for the negative impact of El Niño.**
- **In 2015, the IOD was not sufficiently favourable.**
- Other **factors also influenced the 1997 monsoon**, including **additional moisture from the Arabian Sea and an unusual high-pressure system** over the Iranian Plateau.
- The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) is an **eastward-moving pattern of clouds, rainfall, winds and pressure that travels across the tropics and returns to its starting point every 30-60 days.**
- **It can influence Indian monsoon rainfall.**

Implications:

- A **strong El Niño typically weakens monsoon rains by causing warmer, drier air over India**, hindering rain cloud formation.
- A positive **IOD** phase can **enhance monsoon rains by drawing moist winds over India**, countering El Niño's effects.
- **Accurate monsoon forecasting is crucial for agricultural planning and water resource**

management, as 40% of India's farmland relies on monsoon rains.

- The **onset of a weak monsoon reduces farmers' incomes and leads to higher food prices.**

Way Forward:

- Enhance the **accuracy of monsoon predictions by further integrating global climate models** and improving data collection.
- **Strengthen the understanding of the IOD** and other climatic factors to better predict their influence on the monsoon.
- **Develop adaptive agricultural practices to reduce dependency on monsoon predictions**and improve resilience to variability.
- **Increase investment in irrigation infrastructure to reduce reliance on monsoon rains** and stabilize agricultural output.

Mains Question:

Examine the factors influencing India's monsoon, including El Niño and the Indian Ocean Dipole, and suggest measures to improve forecasting and manage its impacts. (250 words)

Slow recovery: ISRO needs more human and material resources to fulfil its mandate

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Why in Focus?

- **ISRO** successfully launched the **GSLV-F18 mission** and the **NVS-03 satellite**, marking a potential recovery after recent setbacks.
- The last **18 months** have been challenging due to two **PSLV rocket launch failures**, impacting ISRO's mission schedule.

Key Highlights:

- The **NVS-03 satellite** is part of the **NavIC programme**, which has faced a shortfall in functional satellites for the past **six months**.
- **Second-generation NVS satellites** feature indigenously made **atomic clocks**, aligning with **Parliamentary Standing Committee** recommendations.
- The **Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme and Semiconductor Laboratory modernisation** could support specialised space components.
- The **2026-27 budget** for the Department of Space was **₹13,705.6 crore**, with a proposed increase to **₹17,000 crore** in **2027-28**.
- **ISRO** plans to focus on **human spaceflight, a space station, and reusable launch vehicle capabilities.**
- The first-generation **IRNSS satellites** used imported clocks, highlighting the **shift to indigenous technology.**
- The **Electronics Ministry** plans a **five- to seven-year programme for developing specialized components.**

Implications:

- **Procurement bottlenecks and vendor readiness issues delay mission timelines**, affecting ISRO's ability to maintain a consistent launch schedule.
- **Limited workforce and budget constraints hinder ISRO's mission** success rate and future plans.
- **Increasing the Department of Space's budget is crucial for addressing manufacturing**, satellite replacement, and recruitment needs.
- The successful deployment of the **NVS-03 satellite** is critical for the **NavIC programme's functionality and India's strategic autonomy** in navigation services.

Way Forward:

- Allocate **₹17,000 crore** in the **2027-28 Union Budget** to enhance ISRO's manufacturing and recruitment capabilities.
- **Address procurement bottlenecks by streamlining the acquisition of specialized components** and improving vendor readiness.

- **Implement a national space law to facilitate private sector participation** and address liability issues.
- **Develop a dedicated operator for the NavIC programme** to allow ISRO to concentrate on its core objectives.

Mains Question:

Discuss ISRO's resource and procurement challenges and suggest measures to strengthen its capabilities for future missions and sustainable growth of India's space sector. (250 words)

KEYWORDS

Project 18A

- In the news: The Indian government has given in-principle approval to Project 18A, a **major warship programme, amid maritime security challenges from China** and Pakistan.
- **Project 18A aims to develop next-generation stealth-guided missile destroyers for the Indian Navy**, enhancing India's maritime capabilities.
- The project is estimated to **cost around ₹80,000 crore.**
- The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh**, approved the project.
- The warships are **expected to have nearly 75% indigenous content.**
- These destroyers will feature advanced weapons, sensors, and technologies, surpassing the capabilities of the existing Visakhapatnam-class destroyers.
- They will **enhance India's firepower, surveillance, and multi-domain combat capabilities.**

PM Surya Ghar Rooftop Solar Scheme

- Why in news: More than 21 lakh homes under the PM Surya Ghar rooftop solar scheme have received zero electricity bills.
- The PM Surya Ghar Scheme promotes rooftop solar through **collateral-free loans up to ₹2 lakh at a subsidized 6.75% interest rate through 12 Public Sector Banks.**
- The PM Surya Ghar scheme is **administered by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India.**
- The scheme has equipped **65 lakh homes** with rooftop solar installations, with over **21 lakh homes** achieving zero electricity bills.
- It is part of India's strategy to achieve **500 GW of installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030**.
- India's installed solar capacity has increased from **2.8 GW in 2014 to 171 GW today**, marking a growth of approximately **6007%**.
- The cost of solar power has decreased from around **₹8 per unit in 2014-15 to as low as ₹2.15 per unit**.
- The **scheme supports job creation**, particularly in surveying, designing, installing, and maintaining solar systems, and significantly involves women in the workforce.

Places in News

Hodeidah Port

- In the news: Houthi media reported that Saudi air strikes targeted Hodeidah port in Yemen, which is under Houthi control.
- Hodeidah Port is located on **Yemen's western coast along the Red Sea.**
- It is one of the **country's most important ports for goods and humanitarian aid.**
- The port is a **focal point in the conflict between Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led coalition.**
- The **coalition supports Yemen's internationally recognised government**, making the port's strategic location important.
- **Control of Hodeidah is vital for essential goods and military supplies**, while blockades and military actions have worsened Yemen's humanitarian crisis.



Shey-Phoksundo National Park

- In the news: Six Indian tourists are stranded in heavy snowfall in the Shey-Phoksundo National Park area of Nepal, prompting a rescue operation.
- Shey-Phoksundo National Park is **located in Dolpa district, north-western Nepal.**
- It is **Nepal's largest national park**, covering 3,555 sq km.
- The park is home to diverse ecosystems, including **trans-Himalayan and subalpine forests, and hosts endangered species such as the snow leopard and blue sheep.**
- It features Shey Phoksundo Lake, the **deepest lake in Nepal**, situated at an altitude of 3,611 meters, and was **established in 1984.**



Species In News

Infernogallus jamesi (Hell Chicken)

- Why in news: Infernogallus jamesi, nicknamed the "Hell Chicken," is in the news as the first known dinosaur specialised for eating fruits.
- Infernogallus jamesi was a **two-legged dinosaur without teeth**. It belonged to a **group of dinosaurs called oviraptorosaurs, specifically the caenagnathid family.**
- It lived during the **Cretaceous period and weighed about 12 kg as an adult.**
- Unlike most theropods, I. jamesi had a **unique jaw that moved 1.5 cm back and forth, suggesting it ate fleshy fruits and soft plant tissues.**
- This feeding adaptation is similar to that of **Pesquet's parrots** in New Guinea, which strip fruit pulp from seeds.
- The **evolution of I. jamesi coincided with the diversification of flowering plants and fruits**, suggesting a possible ecological link.
- Theropods: **A group of dinosaurs that generally walked on two legs.**
- Oviraptorosaurs: **A group of mostly bird-like theropod dinosaurs.**
- Caenagnathids: **A family of toothless, bird-like theropod dinosaurs within the oviraptorosaurs.**
- Cretaceous Period: **The geological period from about 145 to 66 million years ago.**

