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Editorial Discussion & Analysis (EDA)

13th & 14th August 2021

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Note -

- The Newspaper clippings pasted in PDF are important from Mains point of view as it contains the fodder material for Mains Answer Writing.
- Also watch DND video lectures everyday @ 4 PM on Sleepy's YouTube channel in order to understand how to get the most out of everyday's Newspaper .

Click here to watch the following topics on YouTube

1. Ethics and Integrity

1.1. Crime & Politics (Indian Express)

- Context- Innocent under Proven Guilty

Issue

- Growing criminalisation has been a constant theme of Indian politics.
- According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), 233 MPs in the current Lok Sabha are facing criminal charges up from 128 in 2004.
- As per SC the Onus is on the Election Commission to do something concrete, for example, create a phone app to display the detailed criminal history of any contesting candidate.
- Political parties in India have always been notoriously reluctant to introduce changes to combat criminalisation.
- Apprehension by SC that Legislatures may refrain from taking action to resolve this problem.

Why has the legislature refrained from showing any action?

- **“Winnability” of candidates** is the first reason. The logic of a candidate with criminal charges doing good for the people of a constituency is amusing.
- **Innocent until proven guilty**- The accused politicians maintain their belief that they are victims of “vendetta politics”
- This is ironical as, out of 4.78 lakh prisoners, 3.30 lakh were under trial, i.e. not yet proven guilty.
- Question arises then what about their liberty and fundamental rights? This then is a **gross violation of Article 14** which guarantees to all citizens equality before the law.

The MP/MLA even if wants to play the victim card must know that he/ she is not above the law of the land!

- Safeguards by ECI against Vendetta Politics
- Only offences that carry an imprisonment of at least 5 years are to be considered.
- Case against the candidate should have been filed at least six months before the scheduled elections for it to be considered.
- Competent court must have framed the charges

Way Forward

- Try cases against political candidates in fast-track courts
- Supreme Court had sent a directive to this effect as far back as 2014, directing that cases against political candidates must be completed within a year.
- **The Apex court needs to revisit this directive once again as this is yet to be Implemented.**

2. Governance

2.1. An E Rupi in Hand (Indian Express)

- Context- E Rupi can make social services efficient.

What is E Rupi?

- New mode of **cashless and contactless digital payment** to ensure seamless transfer of benefits to the citizens in a “leak-proof” manner.
- E-RUPI is an e-voucher, which will be delivered to beneficiaries in the form of a QR code and SMS-string-based voucher through which funds will be directly transferred to their bank account.
- **Any government agency and corporation can generate e-RUPI vouchers via their partner banks.**
- **These vouchers are person- and purpose-specific.**
- Example- If they are released by the government for the purpose of vaccination, for instance, then they can be redeemed only for that.

How does this Mechanism work?

- Beneficiary will be required to show the QR code or the SMS message to the merchant, who will scan the same and a verification code will be sent to the beneficiary’s phone number.
- The payee will have to share the code with the merchant and the payment will be successful.
- Prospects for E Rupi in various welfare services-
 - ✓ PDS- The inefficiency of the programme is rooted in high overhead costs, leakages, exclusion and inefficiencies.
 - ❖ **A food-specific e-RUPI voucher will allow beneficiaries to buy rations from an outlet of their choice**
 - ✓ **Fertilisers Subsidies-** e-RUPI will enable farmers to buy fertiliser at nominal prices with direct credit of the subsidy amount into the account of the authorised dealers.
 - ❖ 2011, a **task force on direct transfer of subsidies on kerosene, LPG and fertilisers headed by Nandan Nilekani** had suggested a roadmap for direct cash transfer of fertiliser subsidies in a phased manner.
 - ❖ While the LPG Subsidy got implemented, ones relating to fertiliser subsidy are yet to see the light of the day.
 - ❖ The e-RUPI will allay apprehensions about creating an IT infrastructure, managing nearly 3,00,000 fertiliser sale points.
 - ✓ **School-** Identified students receive vouchers to pay school fees and expenses at empanelled institutions of their choice- public or private.
 - ✓ **Basic Income Support-** e-RUPI can mitigate the stress by rapidly distributing food and cash vouchers at scale.
 - ✓ **Ayushman Bharat-** Beneficiaries will receive e-RUPI vouchers of designated value tenable at empanelled healthcare facilities.

Conclusion

- e-RUPI opens up a world of opportunities to the government, people, and businesses to provide, avail and pay for services seamlessly.
- **Will enhance business efficiency, simplicity, transparency, and accountability in these programmes.**
- e-RUPI could break the policy logjam **freeing targeted beneficiaries from dependence on bank accounts** and providing visibility from the time of issue until redemption.

2.2.Parliament is Abdicating it's oversight rule (The Hindu)

- Concern- Diminishing Role of Parliament

Issue

- In the last one year this was the 4th straight session that ended ahead of the original schedule, other than the cancelled winter 2020 session.
- Both Houses were frequently disrupted as the Government and Opposition parties could not agree on the topics to be debated.
- Lok Sabha worked for just 19% of its originally scheduled time, and the Rajya Sabha for 26%.

Why is this a Cause of worry?

- Government pushed through 20 Bills, mostly without any discussion.
- Interestingly even in State Assemblies there is a similar pattern being followed as in parliament. (In 2020, 91% of all Bills in 19 Assemblies were passed within 5 days of introduction)
- None of the Bills was referred to a Parliamentary committee for examination.
- Committees provide a forum for parliamentarians to engage with experts, stakeholders and government officials to understand the implications of Bill.

Example- Significant changes made in Bills such as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill because of these widespread discussions in the parliamentary committee.

Way forward

- Reason for having a legislature separate from the executive is to have a check on executive power.
- However, in this session Government got every Bill that it introduced passed as an Act, without any debate.
- While much excitement is there amongst the parliamentarians for the upcoming "Grand Vista" project.
- But unless parliamentarians get their act together and act responsibly, this celebration will be useless.

3. Economy

3.1. Our GDP needs HDP (Indian Express)

- Context- Human Development Product

Issue

- We are all familiar with the economic hardship of many Indians.
- Even Before the Pandemic median household income in India was Rs 15,000 per month
- The bottom 25 per cent of households (about 300 million people in India) lived on an income of less than Rs 8,500 per month or Rs 70 per day per person
- However numbers capture stark inequities and injustices across gender, caste, regions, and more.
- **Despite Significant Progress made by India since Independence, we still have a long way to go to build the India that we promised to ourselves in our Constitution.**

What should HDP consist of?

- **Female Labour Force Participation-** The empowerment of women through their economic independence is central to human development.
 - ✓ Currently it is as low as 11%
- **Gender Income Parity-** There is no point in more women participating in the labour force if we continue to give them insecure and lower-paying jobs than men.
- **Stunting-** Stunting amongst children is about 35 per cent.
 - ✓ This reflects many things directly- our public health, the nutritional status of our people, and environmental conditions.
- **Water Quality & Availability-** Measure the quality and flow of 10 key rivers at specified geographical points and periodicity.
 - ✓ Also measure groundwater levels and quality in some of the most stressed areas
- **Quality of Polity-** measure the percentage of members of all our legislatures against whom criminal cases are pending or have convictions.

Conclusion

- Woman Empowerment needs to be addressed through education and employment measures. There can be an incremental rise in GDP if Female Labour Force is strengthened.
- “If you want to see what a country is like, go and see how it treats its women”- Barack Obama
- HDP are a product of innumerable important factors – education, health, livelihoods, societal norms, political climate, environmental conditions.

3.2. Growth Needs Steps Beyond Reforms (The Hindu)

- Context- Growth & Equity Must go Together

How Did The Financial Independence which India gained in 1991 made a departure from the Past?

- Dismantling the vast network of licence, controls and permits that dominated the economic system.
- Redesigning the role of the state and allowing the private sector a larger space to operate within.
- Abandoning the inward looking foreign trade policy and getting integrated with the world economy
- Objective was to improve the productivity and efficiency of the system by creating a more competitive environment

Performance So far post 1991

- The best performance was between 2005-06 and 2010-11 when the GDP grew by 8.7% showing clearly what the potential growth rate of India was despite the fact that this was also the period which included GFC in 2008.
- We still run a high merchandise trade deficit which is off- set to a large extent by the surplus in services.
- As per the Tendulkar expert group methodology, the overall poverty ratio came down from 45.3% in 1993-94 to 37.2% in 2004-05 and further down to 21.9% in 2011-12..
- However Post 2011-12 the reform agenda decreased and and Growth rates have not picked up as before. Poverty growth rates were running high even before the Pandemic.
- In a developing economy, in the final analysis, growth is driven by investment. Reforms are only a Necessary condition, but not sufficient.

Way Forward

- Reforms supplemented by a careful nurturing of the investment climate are needed to spur growth again
- Centre and States must be joint partners as far as reforms related to Financial sector, electricity & Governance is Concerned.
- From the Government's end there needs to be an increased focus on social sectors such as health and education.
- In terms of Provision of Government Services, emphasise more on Quality rather than Quantity.
- Only in an environment of high growth, equity can be pushed aggressively.

Question for Today

- Moving towards the 75th Independence day, how sacrosanct do you think is our "Temple of Democracy". The role of Parliament as envisaged by our founding fathers, has it served it's purpose? Comment. (250 words)

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