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Minimum Wages Act for Domestic Workers

A petition filed by NGO Common Cause along with social activist Aruna Roy and the National Platform for Domestic Workers has sought the **Supreme Court's intervention to lay down guidelines to protect domestic workers' rights.**

- The petition sought the recognition of domestic work **under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.** The work hours should be **reduced to eight a day** and the workers should be given a **mandatory weekly off as a basic right under Article 21.**
- According to estimates by the **International Labour Organisation (ILO),** there are at least **four million domestic workers in India.**

International Labour Organization (ILO)

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a **United Nations agency** dealing with labour issues, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
- The **ILO was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I,** to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is **based on social justice.**
- It is a **tripartite organization,** the **only one** of its kind bringing together representatives of **governments, employers and workers in its executive bodies.**
- Headquarters: **Geneva, Switzerland**

Background

- Domestic worker is a person who is employed in any household on a temporary or permanent basis to do the household work. Many resort to domestic work because of decline of employment opportunities in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors.
- Domestic work as an **economic activity is too vast and employs too many to remain unregulated.**

Need for Protection of Domestic Workers

- Since domestic workers belong to the unorganized sector, there are **no laws safeguarding their rights** – no minimum wage requirements, no health or insurance benefits, and no job security whatsoever.
- Most of these are from **vulnerable communities** – Adivasis, Dalits or landless Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Nearly all of them are migrant workers. And an overwhelming number are women. This makes them **easy to replace, and easier still to exploit**.
- Minimum wage provisions are important instruments to protect the most vulnerable and lowest-paid workers – such as domestic workers – from unduly low wages.
- A minimum wage recognizes the basic contribution of domestic workers to homes and societies, and is a key **means of ensuring the principle of equal pay for work of equal value**.

Challenges

- While several legislations such as the **Unorganized Social Security Act, 2008, Sexual Harassment against Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and Minimum Wages Schedules notified in various states** refer to domestic workers, there remains an **absence of comprehensive, uniformly applicable, national legislation** that guarantees fair terms of employment and decent working conditions.
- About half the states have included domestic workers as labourers under the Minimum Wages Act, which sets out terms of payment, hours of work and leave. Yet, this law is **grossly inadequate**.

The law does not, for instance, require domestic workers and employers to register with any authority, which is crucial for monitoring whether both parties are fulfilling their contractual obligations and for adjudicating conflicts.
- **Absence of proper documentation**, which also increases their reliance on employers to access social security benefits. As employment is largely through word of mouth or personal referrals, employment contracts are rarely negotiated, leaving the terms of employment to the whims of the employer.
- Unlike work in a formal setting, domestic work is **not guided by clear and agreed production or output goals**.
- Furthermore, **privacy norms do not bode well with the idea of regulations** (labour inspectors) entering private households and ensuring regulations.
- However, discussions are underway on a national policy for domestic workers, with the aim to protect the domestic workers from abuse, harassment, violence and guarantee them rights in the matter of social security and minimum wages.
- India is a **signatory to the ILO's 189th convention**, known as the Convention on Domestic Workers; but has **not ratified it yet**.

Convention on Domestic Workers

- The Convention on Domestic Workers, formally the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers is a convention setting **labour standards for domestic workers**.
- It is the **189th ILO convention** and was adopted during the 100th session of the International Labour Organization at Geneva in June 2011.
- It is a strong recognition of the economic and social value of domestic work and a call for action to address the existing exclusions of domestic workers from labour and social protection.
- The convention mandates that domestic workers be given daily and weekly rest hours, their payment must meet the minimum wage requirement.
- Ratifying states are also required to take protective measures against violence against workers and are also required to enforce a minimum age for employment.
- However, since these **provisions are not binding** on those countries that have not ratified the convention, India is not obliged to enforce these recommendations.

Conclusion

- Domestic work has enabled many women to **enter the labour market and benefit from economic autonomy**. The large supply of domestic workers in India has meant a shift of care responsibilities from women in the households to hired domestic workers who are a **predominantly female and largely invisible**.
 - There is the need to **change the idea that care-giving is a private domestic responsibility unique to women**.
 - Hence, the demands for decent work for domestic workers are **two pronged**- first and foremost, it calls for recognition of the **rights of domestic workers for fair terms of employment** that are no less favourable than those of other workers, and secondly, it calls for the **active participation of the state and the recognition of the existence of structural inequality that is perpetuated by not recognizing the sheer weight of 'care work'**.
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InSight on Mars

After a seven-month journey, Nasa's Mars InSight probe has reached its destination and touched down near the red planet's equator.

- InSight (Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport) is on a 24-month mission.
- InSight will **study the interior of Mars**.

- The landing site is **Elysium Planitia** (a flat-smooth plain just north of the equator considered to be the perfect location from which to study the deep Martian interior), where InSight can stay still and quiet all through.
- It is NASA's first attempt to touchdown on Mars since the **Curiosity rover** arrived in 2012.
- More than half of 43 attempts to reach Mars with rovers, orbiters, and probes by space agencies from around the world have failed. For example, in October 2016, the European Space Agency lost its ExoMars Schiaparelli craft during an attempted Mars landing.
- From Earth, NASA team will be monitoring radio signals using a variety of spacecraft — and even radio telescopes on Earth.

Significance

- Mars InSight's goal is to listen for **quakes and tremors** as a way to unveil the Red Planet's inner mysteries.
 - The mission seeks to answer critical questions about **rocky planet formation in the early days of the solar system**.
 - The InSight mission will bring several martian "firsts" to interplanetary science, including the first **seismometer** situated on the surface, **to detect and analyze waves** created by "marsquakes"
 - Measuring Marsquakes will give **information on Mars' internal structure** and reveal more information like the smaller size and lesser density of Mars as compared to Earth and Venus.
 - With InSight, **scientists hope to compare Earth to Mars**, and better understand how a planet's starting materials make it more or less likely to support life.
 - Mission scientists will use antennas on the lander to track its position to **deduce how much Mars wobbles on its axis**. The amount of wobble reflects the size of the planet's core and whether it is molten or solid.
 - Earth's rotating iron core generates the magnetic field which prevents the atmosphere from being stripped away by high-energy particles in the solar wind, thereby shielding life from harmful radiation,
 - However, Mars lost its magnetic field and much of its atmosphere, causing temperatures to drop and exposing the surface to intense radiation. InSight may help explain this anomaly.
 - The stationary lander also carries a six-foot **robotic arm** and a self-hammering "nail" instrument that will burrow itself 16 feet into the ground **to study heat transfer**.
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Ten Years of Mumbai Terror Attack

26/11 Mumbai terror attack constituted multiple terrorist attacks that occurred on November 26, 2008, in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

The most audacious terror attack till the 26/11 Mumbai terror incident was the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001 by the **Pakistan-based terror outfits**, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

Government Initiatives

- In the wake of the terror attack, several steps were initiated to streamline the security set-up.
- **Coastal security** was given high priority, and it is with the **Navy/Coast Guard/marine police**.
- A specialised agency to deal with terrorist offences, the **National Investigation Agency**, was set up and has been functioning from January 2009.
- The **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** has been constituted to create an appropriate database of security-related information.
- Four new operational hubs for the **National Security Guard** have been created to ensure rapid response to terror attacks.
- The Multi-Agency Centre, which functions under the Intelligence Bureau, was further strengthened and its activities expanded.
- The Navy constituted a Joint Operations Centre to keep vigil over India's extended coastline.

Way Forward

- Terrorism remains a major threat, and with modern refinements, new terrorist methodologies and terrorism mutating into a global franchise, the threat potential has become greater.
- Speeding up the fitting of automatic identification systems in fishing boats.
- All coastal states should beef up their marine police sufficiently.
- Air and coastal sea patrols should be conducted regularly.
- The sea has no checkpoints or perimeter fencing. Sanitizing it is very difficult, so the unity of command and control is essential.
- Whether raids like that of ten years ago can happen again is debatable but to think that they can be ruled out will be premature. So, India needs to further tighten its preparedness to cope with such situations.

Important Facts for Prelims (27th November 2018)

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- A **centralized electronic platform named “PAiSA – Portal for Affordable Credit and Interest Subvention Access”**, has been launched by **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs**.
 - The web platform has been designed and developed by **Allahabad Bank** which is the Nodal bank.
 - The portal will process interest subvention (subsidy offered on interest rate) on bank loans **to beneficiaries under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)**.
 - Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of subvention on monthly basis under DAY-NULM will give the necessary financial support to small entrepreneurs in a timely manner.
 - PAiSA is aimed to connect directly with the beneficiaries, ensuring that there is greater transparency and efficiency in delivery of services.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs aims to **reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households** by enabling them to access **gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities**.

HAUSLA-2018

- **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** inaugurated four-day festival, 'Hausla 2018'.
- It is a national festival for **children living in Child Care Institutions (CCIs)** to provide them a platform to showcase their skills and realise their hidden talents.

Korean Wrestling in UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- **UNESCO has accepted a joint bid by North and South Korea** and granted **Intangible Cultural Heritage** status to **Korean wrestling**.
- The two countries had initially filed separately, but then decided to try a joint approach.
- The ancient sport is known as **‘Ssirum’ in the North Korea and ‘Ssireum’ in the South Korea**.
- Competitors win by making any part of an **opponent's body above the knee touch the ground**.
- The joint bid marks a highly symbolic step on the road to **inter-Korean reconciliation**.

Constitution Day

- Constitution Day also known as **Samvidhan Divas**, is celebrated on **26 November** every year to commemorate the adoption of Constitution of India.

- On **26 November 1949**, the **Constituent Assembly of India adopted** the Constitution of India, and it **came into force on 26 January 1950**.
- Constitution is the country's supreme law and not only defines the framework of the basic political principles, but also establishes what the different government institutions should do in terms of procedure, powers and duties.
- Constitution of India is the **longest written constitution** of any country in the world.

Tawang Monastery

- Tawang Monastery is located in **Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Known in Tibetan as **Gaden Namgyal Lhatse**, it was built according to the wishes of the **5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso**.
- However, it was **founded in 1680-81 by a monk named Merag Lodre Gyatso of the Gelugpa sect (Tibetan Buddhism)** after the 4th Dalai Lama gave him a painting of goddess Palden Lhamo to be kept in the monastery.

Tibetan Buddhism is the major religion of Tibetans around the world. It covers the teachings of **Mahayana Buddhism along with Tantric and Shamanic rituals**, and is in some part **influenced by Bon, the ancient, indigenous religion of Tibet**.

- An eight-metre high gilded statue of Lord Buddha dominates the sanctum of the monastery.
- It is the **largest monastery in India** and **second largest in the world after the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet**.

Aadi Mahotsav

- The **4th edition** of annual "Aadi Mahotsav", a National Tribal Festival organized by **Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with TRIFED and Ministry of Culture** will be held from 16-30 November, 2018 at Dilli Haat.
- The theme of the festival: **Celebration of the spirit of tribal culture, craft, cuisine and commerce**.
- **Article 46** of the Constitution of India lays down that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)

It was founded in **1987**. It is a national-level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
