

## State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022 report : UN

(GS Paper 3, Issue of Food Security)

### Why in news?

- Recently, the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022 report was **issued by UN agencies** Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- The number of **people affected by hunger globally rose to as many as 828 million in 2021**, an increase of about 46 million since 2020 and 150 million since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Key findings on India:

- In India, the **number of undernourished people declined** to 224.3 million in 2019-21 from 247.8 million in 2004-06.
- In percentage terms, the **prevalence of undernourishment in the total population** in India stood at 21.6 per cent in 2004-06 and declined to 16.3 per cent in 2019-21, the **prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age** declined to 30.9 per cent in 2020 from 41.7 per cent in 2012 and the **prevalence of overweight children under five years** of age was 1.9 per cent in 2020 from 2.4 per cent in 2012.
- The **prevalence of obesity in India's adult population increased to 3.9 per cent in 2016** from 3.1 per cent in 2012 and anaemic women aged 15 to 49 years declined marginally from 53.2 per cent in 2012 to 53 per cent in 2019.
- In India, people who were unable to afford a healthy diet touched 973.3 million in 2020 or nearly 70.5 per cent, up from 948.6 million in 2019 (69.4 per cent).
- In 2017, about a billion people were unable to afford a healthy diet in India and this number has declined to 966.6 million in 2018.

### Subsidies:

- The **subsidies to consumers** provided in **Lower- Income Countries and Middle-Income Countries** most often take the form of in-kind or cash transfers under the social protection programmes.
- India and Indonesia, for example, provide substantial subsidies to final consumers under the **Targeted Public Distribution System for grains in India**, and the food assistance programme (BPNT) based on electronic vouchers for rice, in Indonesia.
- The **most prominent example of a (Lower-middle-income countries) LMIC is India**, where the food and agricultural policy has historically focused on protecting consumers by ensuring affordable food prices,

through export restrictions (on wheat, non-basmati rice, and milk, among others) and through marketing regulations around pricing and public procurement, public food stockholding and distribution of a vast range of agricultural commodities, it said.

- As such, **farmers have constantly faced price disincentives in aggregate terms** (negative NRPs). Input subsidies and expenditure on general services such as in R&D and infrastructure have been widely used as a means of compensating them for the price disincentives generated by trade and market measures, and for boosting production and self-sufficiency in the country.

#### **Global Observations:**

- After remaining relatively unchanged since 2015, the **proportion of people affected by hunger jumped in 2020** and continued to rise in 2021, to 9.8 per cent of the world population.
- This compares with 8 per cent in 2019 and 9.3 per cent in 2020.
- World hunger rose in 2021, with around 2.3 billion people facing **moderate or severe difficulty obtaining enough to eat** and that was before the Ukraine war, which has sparked increases in the cost of grain, fertiliser and energy.
- The gender gap in food insecurity continued to rise in 2021; **31.9 per cent of women in the world were moderately or severely food insecure**, compared to 27.6 per cent of men --- a gap of more than 4 percentage points, compared with 3 percentage points in 2020.
- An estimated **45 million children under the age of five were suffering from wasting**, the deadliest form of malnutrition, which increases children's risk of death by up to 12 times.
- Furthermore, **149 million children under the age of five had stunted growth** and development due to a chronic lack of essential nutrients in their diets, while 39 million were overweight.

#### **Concerns:**

- It warned that the ongoing war in Ukraine, is disrupting supply chains and further affecting prices of grain, fertiliser and energy resulting in more price increases in the first half of 2022.
- At the same time, they said, more frequent and extreme climate events are also disrupting supply chains, especially in low-income countries.
- Ukraine and Russia together produced almost a third of the world's wheat and barley and half of its sunflower oil, while Russia and its ally Belarus are the world's No. 2 and 3 producers of potash, a key ingredient of fertiliser.
- Nearly 924 million people (**11.7 per cent of the global population**) faced **food insecurity** at severe levels, an increase of 207 million in two years.

#### **Conclusion:**

- This report repeatedly highlights the intensification of these major drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition: conflict, climate extremes and economic shocks, combined with growing inequalities.

### **Turbulence in the airline**

**(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

#### **Why in news?**

- Recently, the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** served a **show-cause notice on SpiceJet** following at least eight mid-air incidents and an accident since May.
- In its notice, DGCA has blamed these occurrences on "poor internal safety oversight" as well as the airline's failure to maintain its planes due to its weak financial health.

#### **What has the DGCA said in its show cause notice?**

- It says that its review of incidents reported by SpiceJet since April showed that on several occasions the airline was forced to either cut short its journey and turn back its aircraft and land at the airport of origin, or continue to its destination with "degraded safety margins".
- It has blamed "poor internal safety oversight" and "inadequate maintenance actions" for the fall in safety standards
- In its harshest observation, the regulator has said that a financial assessment undertaken by it in September 2021 revealed that the airline witnessed shortage in supply of spare parts because of its failure to pay vendors on time, most of whom were conducting business with the airline on "cash and carry" basis.

### How are incidents and accidents classified?

- The Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017 categorise occurrences into "**accidents**", "**serious incidents**" and "**incidents**".
- **An accident is one where a passenger is fatally or seriously injured**, or when the aircraft sustains structural damage or if the aircraft is missing or inaccessible.
- However, not all kinds of physical damage to the aircraft are considered accidents such as when only one of the two engines fail, damage to propellers, wingtips, antennas, probes, vanes, tires, brakes, wheels, panels, landing gear doors, wind screens, the aircraft skin or minor damages to main rotor blades, tail rotor blades, landing gear, and those resulting from hail or bird strike.
- A "**serious incident**" means an occurrence where there is a high probability of an accident and an "**incident**" is one which could affect the safety of flight operations.



### Were the recent SpiceJet incidents serious?

- Since May, SpiceJet saw incidents of **cracked windshield, an engine shut down and an engine failure, smoke in cabin**, a bird strike, a pressurisation snag and a glitch in the weather radar.
- It also saw an accident, when the airline's Boeing 737-800 flew into turbulence resulting in injuries to several passengers including two who were admitted to an ICU due to head and spine injuries.
- A crack on the inner windshield can lead to pressurisation failure, which can then result in a drop in oxygen levels and cause hypoxia among passengers.
- Smoke inside passenger cabin is also serious according to the rules, and a glitch in the weather radar forced the pilot of a SpiceJet freighter to return to the airport shortly after take off on July 5. A bird strike though is not an airline's fault.

### What can the DGCA do?

- The Aircraft Rules 1937 empower the DGCA to impose a fine of ₹1 crore, detain any aircraft if it can lead to danger to persons in the aircraft or to any other persons or property.
- The regulator can also **suspend the airline's air operator's certificate (AOC)** which is a pre-requisite for offering commercial air services in the country or curtail the airline's schedule, i.e. flights. But the DGCA is also under scrutiny.

### Questions over free speech

**(GS Paper 2, Judiciary)**

**Context:**

- Twitter India's decision to **petition the Karnataka High Court** against the Centre's order to block tweets and even handles, under Section 69 of the Information Technology Act 2000 will answer quite a few vexed questions.



**Claims by Twitter:**

- Twitter, which has approximately 48 million users in India, alleged that the government had abused its power by ordering it to arbitrarily and disproportionately remove several tweets from its platform.
- The company also alleged the government threatened to open criminal proceedings against its chief compliance officer in India if the company didn't comply with orders.

**Valid concerns:**

- The point on which Twitter and a few other social media platforms, which are categorised as intermediaries, differ with the government is that **no notice is given before directions are passed regarding takedown of tweets or any content or blocking of accounts.**
- This matter can only be decided by the court as the Information Technology law clearly empowers the government to make rules and regulations from time to time.

**New rules for intermediaries in 2021:**

- As the IT law was passed by Parliament with this provision way back in 2000, the framing of subsequent rules are in the nature of secondary legislation and do not require approval of Parliament again.
- India's new social media rules rolled out on February 25, 2021, to make the tech giants more responsible and accountable for the content they allow their users to upload on their platforms.
- The Centre introduced The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 to regulate the content of the Over-the-Top platforms and other top social media sites like Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter.
- These rules **require intermediaries to appoint a set of regulatory officials for compliance** of the laws and coordination with the government.

- Further, it has put in place a system to look into users' grievance. While there is nothing wrong with these provisions, the problem begins when failure to implement the provisions of these laws or any direction with regard to takedown of content could lead to the loss of intermediary status that confers legal protection, as such platforms host third-party content.

### Harsh penalties:

- The new rules, notified in 2021, introduced a clause that **loss of intermediary status or failure to comply with government's directions** make intermediaries liable to face criminal proceedings, and executives can even face imprisonment of up to seven years. This provision was not there earlier and is seen as draconian, something like the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act of yesteryears.
- Critics see such rules as the government's way of preventing criticism on social media platforms as intermediaries can be asked to remove any content which is critical of the government.

### Freedom of speech:

- Another proposal to make the central government (instead of, ideally, an independent judicial or a regulatory body) the **arbiter of permissible speech on the internet is also quite unfair**.
- While Twitter or any other entity just can't challenge the government's sovereign powers to legislate, one has every right to differ with the law.

### Approaching Courts:

- The courts are the appropriate forum to decide whether the rules framed by the government are in consonance with the IT Act as well as the constitutional provisions.
- Prior to Twitter, **WhatsApp and Google have already moved the courts** on certain aspects of the rule. While WhatsApp has challenged the provision that requires it to disclose the originator of any message seen as mischievous by the government, as it amounts to breaking its encryption that provides privacy to users, Google has contended that it cannot be categorised as a social media intermediary as it is just an aggregator.

### Have platforms complied with IT Rules?

- None of the social media platforms, except the India's Twitter rival Koo, has so far fully complied with the rules.
- This new rule will harm the existing users as according to this rule, social media sites will have to trace all the messages including the private conversations of the users, which can amount to a violation of privacy.
- Facebook in 2021 announced that it has been aiming to comply with the rules and is holding further discussions.
- Twitter issued a statement, raising safety concerns of its employees working in India and also the potential threat to the freedom of speech and expression of its users and stated they want to have an open discussion with the authorities.

### Conclusion:

- Several public interest litigations have also been filed in various high courts against the rules; these have been clubbed and are before the Supreme Court.
- The petitions of WhatsApp, Google, and Twitter should also be clubbed and, ideally, the SC should expeditiously decide whether the IT Rules made in 2021 are constitutionally sound or not.
- That's the right way to go, instead of painting these legal challenges as defiance of the government of India by Silicon Valley platforms.

## Commission for Sub-categorising OBCs

**(GS Paper 2, Social Justice)**

### Why in news?

- Recently, the Centre extended the tenure of the Commission to examine Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) **headed by Justice G Rohini**, former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court.
- The Commission, constituted nearly five years ago, **has got 10 extensions so far**, and now has until January 31, 2023 to submit its report.



## What is sub-categorisation of OBCs?

- The idea is to **create sub-categories within the larger group of OBCs** for the purpose of reservation.
- OBCs are granted 27% reservation in jobs and education under the central government.
- This has been a legal debate for other reservation categories too: in September 2021, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court reopened the debate on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations.
- For OBCs, the debate arises out of the perception that only a few affluent communities among the over 2,600 included in the Central List of OBCs have secured a major part of the 27% reservation.
- The argument for creating sub-categories within OBCs is that it would ensure “equitable distribution” of representation among all OBC communities.
- It was to examine this that the **Rohini Commission was constituted on October 2, 2017**.

## Terms of reference:

It was originally set up with three terms of reference:

- a) To examine the **extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation** among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBCs with reference to such classes included in the Central List.
- b) To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorisation within such OBCs.
- c) To take up the **exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities** or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.
- d) To **study the various entries in the Central List of OBCs** and recommend correction of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription.
- e) This was added following a letter to the government from the Commission on July 30, 2019, in which it flagged “several ambiguities in the list as it stands now”.

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>OBC</b>	<b>EWS</b>	<b>OTHERS</b>
<b>Group-A</b>	50,068	6,440 (12.86%)	2,826 (5.64%)	8,455 (16.88%)	11 (0.02%)	32,226 (64.58%)
<b>Group-B</b>	1,25,732	20,954 (16.66%)	8,244 (6.55%)	19,829 (15.77%)	5 (0.04%)	76,700 (61.0%)
<b>Group-C (excluding safai karmacharis)</b>	3,22,503	58,744 (18.22%)	22,296 (6.91%)	72,710 (22.54%)	84 (0.03%)	1,68,639 (52.29%)
<b>Group-D (safai karmacharis)</b>	13,722	4,507 (32.72%)	1,056 (7.66%)	2,774 (20.14%)	0	5,435 (39.46%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,12,075</b>	<b>90,675 (17.70%)</b>	<b>34,422 (6.72%)</b>	<b>1,03,768 (20.26%)</b>	<b>100 (0.02%)</b>	<b>2,83,110 (55.28%)</b>

## What progress has it made so far?

- The Commission is ready with the draft report on sub-categorisation. Following the new term of reference added in January 22, the Commission began studying the list of communities in the central list.
- Among the challenges it has faced, one has been the **absence of data for the population of various communities to compare** with their representation in jobs and admissions.
- The Commission wrote to Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot on December 12, 2018, requesting for an appropriate Budget provision for a proposed all-India survey for an estimate of the caste-wise population of OBCs.
- On August 31, 2018, then Home Minister Rajnath Singh had announced that in Census 2021, data of OBCs will also be collected, but since then the government has been silent on this, whereas groups of OBCs have been demanding enumeration of OBCs in the Census.

### **What have its findings been so far?**

- In 2018, the Commission analysed the data of 1.3 lakh central jobs given under OBC quota over the preceding five years and OBC admissions to central higher education institutions, including universities, IITs, NITs, IIMs and AIIMS, over the preceding three years.
- The findings were: **97% of all jobs and educational seats have gone to just 25% of all sub-castes** classified as OBCs; 24.95% of these jobs and seats have gone to just 10 OBC communities; 983 OBC communities,, 37% of the total have zero representation in jobs and educational institutions; 994 OBC sub-castes have a total representation of only 2.68% in recruitment and admissions.

### **What is the extent of OBC recruitment in central jobs?**

- According to data by Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, in Rajya Sabha, the total number of Group A to Group C employees (including safai karmacharis) was 5.12 lakh.
- Of these, 17.70% are SC, 6.72% ST, 20.26% OBC (Other Backward Classes), and 0.02% EWS (Economically Weaker Sections).
- In Group-A, the highest tier among these, the representation of SCs is just 12.86%, of STs 5.64% and of OBCs 16.88%. Reservation for these communities is 15%, 7.5% and 27% respectively.
- These data cover 43 departments and government offices including Cabinet Secretariat, UPSC and Election Commission, but excluding the largest central government employers such as Railways and Department of Posts.
- Among Secretaries and Special Secretaries, only six belong to SCs and STs, and, “no data regarding OBC is maintained”.
- Out of 91 Additional Secretaries, the number of officers belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities are 10 and 4 respectively and out of 245 Joint Secretaries, the number of officers belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities are 26 and 29 respectively in various Ministries/Departments under Central Staffing Scheme.