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GIG ECONOMY AND PLATFORM WORKERS IN INDIA

Context

- Recently, Gig workers have complained of heat stroke, fainting, with no health-related support from the companies they work for.

About the Gig Economy and Platform Workers in India

- The gig economy, aka the **freelance economy or on-demand economy**, characterised by temporary, flexible jobs, is becoming increasingly significant in India.
- It is driven by companies that prefer hiring **short-term contractors, consultants, and freelancers** instead of full-time employees.
- It is about individual workers carrying out tasks for clients through the intermediation of a platform on a **task-by-task basis**, and it is being driven by the widespread adoption of **smartphones, digital technologies, and the country's demographic dividend**.
- It can be broadly classified into **platform and non-platform-based workers**.
 - Platform workers** are those whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms.
- NITI Aayog's report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy' defines a gig worker as:
 - someone who engages in income-earning activities outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship, as well as in the informal sector.**
 - Additionally, it defines those working with platforms such as **Ola, Uber, Dunzo, Swiggy, Zomato and Urban Company** as platform workers.

Growth of the Gig Economy

- According to a **NITI Aayog report**, the number of workers engaged in the gig economy was estimated to be 77 lakh in 2020-21, which constituted 2.6% of the non-agricultural workforce or 1.5% of the total workforce in India.
- These workers are spread across **various skill levels**, with about **47%** of the gig work in **medium-skilled jobs**, about **22% in high-skilled**, and about **31% in low-skilled jobs**.

- It is **expected to expand to 2.35 crore** (23.5 million) workers **by 2029-30**. By 2029-30, gig workers are expected to form 6.7% of the non-agricultural workforce or 4.1% of the total livelihood workforce in India.

Challenges Faced by Gig Workers

- Long working hours:** Despite the growth, gig workers in India often work long hours, with 85% of them working more than eight hours a day. Many gig workers reported feeling unsafe in their jobs.
 - Almost a third of app-based cab drivers work for over 14 hours a day, while more than 83% work more than 10 hours and 60% work over 12 hours.
- Low Pay:** More than 43% of the workers earn less than 500 a day or 15,000 a month, after deducting all their costs.
- Other issues** related to this sector are huge deductions such as commission, customer misbehaviour, job insecurity, income instability, lack of basic employment rights, commoditization of work, lack of legal recognition and inability to take leaves etc.

Related Government Initiatives

- National Urban Policy Framework (NUPF):** The NUPF recognizes that urbanisation in India, set to reach a figure close to 558.8 million by 2031, is not simply a demographic shift.
 - It places cities and towns at the centre of India's development trajectory.
 - In the coming decades, the urban sector will play a critical role in the structural transformation of the Indian economy.
- Code of Social Security (2020):** It envisages framing of suitable social security schemes for gig workers and platform workers on matters relating to life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old age protection, etc.
 - However, these provisions under the Code have not come into force.
- e-Shram Portal:** It was launched for registration and creation of a **Comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers** including gig workers and platform workers.
 - It allows a person to register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis, which is spread across around 400 occupations.

- In 2023, **Government of Rajasthan** introduced the '**Rajasthan Platform-based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill**' which has stringent provisions against errant aggregators, including barring them from operating in the State.

Recommendations for the Future

- There is a need for platform-led transformational and outcome-based skilling, enhancing social inclusion through gender sensitization and accessibility awareness programs for workers and their families, and extending social security measures in partnership mode as envisaged in the Code on Social Security 2020.
- **Social security measures:** Authors of the study recommended stronger social security for app-based workers.
 - ♦ Social security measures are required like paid sick leave, health access and insurance, retirement/pension plans and other contingency benefits.
- **Skilling:** It is recommended that skill gaps be bridged by carrying out assessments periodically and partnering with platform businesses for onboarding skilled women and persons with disabilities.
 - ♦ It is also suggested to make aggregate data public to enable decision-making.

Source: TH

UN REPORT REVEALS RECORD 120 MILLION PEOPLE DISPLACED GLOBALLY

Context

- A record 120 million people were living in a forcibly displaced status globally from the beginning of 2023 through May 2024, according to the Global Trends report by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Key Findings

- **Record Displacement:** The number of forcibly displaced individuals rose to 120 million by May 2024, a nearly 10% increase from 2022, representing about 1.5% of the global population.
- **Notable Statistics:** At the end of 2023, 117.3 million people were forcibly displaced.
 - ♦ Fighting in Sudan caused over 6 million people to flee by December 2023.

- ♦ In Gaza, up to 1.7 million people, or over 75% of the population, have been displaced.

- ♦ There are around 6 million Palestinian refugees under the UNRWA mandate, with 1.6 million in the Gaza Strip.

- **Global Distribution:** Contrary to common perception, 75% of refugees and migrants move to low and middle-income countries.

- **Asylum Applications:** Half of all new asylum applications in 2023 were filed in five countries, with the US receiving the most (1.2 million), followed by Germany (329,100), Egypt, Spain, and Canada.

- **Causes:** Major drivers include persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, and public order disturbances. Conflict, in particular, remains a significant factor, with the ongoing situation in Sudan and the war in Gaza cited as major causes of displacement.

- **Other Affected Regions:** Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Haiti, Syria, and Armenia are also significant sources of displaced people.

- **Impact of Climate Change:** Climate-related hazards significantly impact displacement trends, with extreme weather events exacerbating the vulnerabilities of displaced populations.

Implications of Displacement & Migrations Around the World

- **Negative Implications:**

- ♦ **Humanitarian Crisis:** Displacement often leads to immense human suffering, loss of life, trauma, and the erosion of basic human rights. Refugees and migrants face vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, and discrimination.

- ♦ **Economic Strain:** Host countries, especially those with limited resources, may struggle to provide adequate services and infrastructure for large numbers of newcomers. This can strain public resources and social systems.

- ♦ **Social Tension:** Large-scale migration can sometimes lead to social tensions, xenophobia, and discrimination in host communities. Integrating newcomers can be a challenge, requiring careful planning and resources.

- ♦ **Political Instability:** Displacement and migration can exacerbate political tensions and conflicts, both in countries of origin and destination.

- **Positive Implications:**

- ♦ **Economic Growth:** Migrants can contribute to economic growth in host countries by filling labor shortages, starting businesses, and paying taxes.
- ♦ **Cultural Enrichment:** Migration can lead to cultural exchange and diversity, enriching societies with new perspectives, ideas, and traditions.
- ♦ **Skills and Knowledge Transfer:** Migrants often bring valuable skills and knowledge that can benefit host countries in various sectors.
- ♦ **Demographic Balance:** In some cases, migration can help address demographic challenges, such as aging populations.

Treaties and Programs

- **1951 Refugee Convention:** The cornerstone of international refugee law, defining who is a refugee and outlining their rights and the obligations of states to protect them.
- **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR):** A framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing among states in responding to refugee situations.
- **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM):** A non-binding agreement that aims to improve cooperation on international migration.
- **UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees):** The UN agency responsible for protecting and assisting refugees worldwide.
- **IOM (International Organization for Migration):** The UN agency that provides services and advice on migration to governments and migrants.

Way Ahead

- **Conflict Prevention and Resolution:** Addressing the root causes of displacement, such as conflict, persecution, and human rights abuses, is crucial to prevent future crises.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** Providing immediate assistance to displaced populations, including food, shelter, healthcare, and protection, is essential to save lives and alleviate suffering.
- **Sustainable Development:** Investing in development programs in countries of origin can create economic opportunities and improve living conditions, reducing the incentives for people to migrate.

- **Legal Pathways and Protection:** Expanding legal pathways for migration, such as resettlement programs and work visas, can provide safer and more orderly alternatives to irregular migration. Strengthening legal protections for refugees and asylum seekers is also vital.

Source: TH

ISRO'S REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLE (RLV) PROGRAMME

Context

- Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) informed that it is all set to carry out the **third and final RLV Landing Experiment (RLV LEX)** under the Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Programme.

About the Reusable Launch Vehicle Landing Experiment (RLV LEX) of ISRO

- RLV-LEX missions involve taking an unmanned winged prototype, christened Pushpak, to a designated height and releasing it to land safely under varying conditions.
- The configuration of RLV-TD is similar to that of an aircraft and combines the complexity of **both launch vehicles and aircraft**.
- The winged RLV-TD has been configured to act as a flying test bed to evaluate various technologies, namely, **hypersonic flight, autonomous landing, and powered cruise flight**.
- In the future, this vehicle aims to be scaled up to become the **first stage of India's reusable two-stage orbital launch vehicle**.

Third and Final RLV LEX

- The unmanned winged prototype, christened **Pushpak**, will be carried to a height of 4.5 km and 500 metres to one side of the runway using an IAF Chinook helicopter and released.
 - ♦ The **LEX-01 and LEX-02** were carried out successfully in early 2023 and 2024 respectively.
- It aims to look at how the sink rate, or the rate of descent, can be cut down to reduce the impact load. It will also have on board a **real-time kinematics (RTK) package**.
- It is a more **challenging mission compared to the second one**, where the altitude was the same but the lateral distance from the runway was 150 metres.
- Another challenge before the upcoming mission is **handling tailwind conditions**.

Significance of the Experiment

- It marked a significant milestone in ISRO's journey towards achieving **low-cost access to space**. The successful execution of the landing experiment demonstrated **ISRO's capability to develop a reusable launch vehicle**, which is expected to significantly **reduce the cost of launching satellites into orbit**.
- **The RLV-TD programme** is a testament to ISRO's commitment to **innovation and technological advancement**. With the successful completion of this landing experiment, ISRO has moved one step closer to realising its **vision of developing a fully reusable launch vehicle**.
- After the successful completion of the RLV-LEX series, ISRO plans to proceed with the **next stage of tests under the RLV-TD Programme**, involving an unmanned **Orbital Re-entry Vehicle (ORV)** that is 1.6 times the size of 'Pushpak' used in the LEX missions.
 - ♦ The ORV will be placed in a 400-kilometre orbit around Earth using a modified **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)**

Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Technology

- It is being explored by several countries and organisations like the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), the United Launch Alliance (ULA), and the European Space Agency (ESA), along with the ISRO.

Global Demonstration

- **NASA:** Reusable space vehicles have been in existence for a long time with NASA space shuttles carrying out dozens of human space flight missions.
- **SpaceX:** The use case for reusable space launch vehicles has revived with the **private space launch services** provider SpaceX demonstrating partially reusable launch systems with its **Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy** rockets since 2017.
 - ♦ SpaceX is also working on a fully reusable launch vehicle system called Starship.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

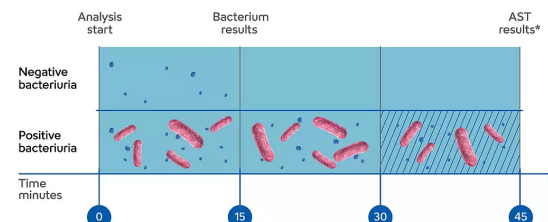
LONGITUDE PRIZE ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

Context

- Recently, **PA-100 AST System** (a high-tech, transformative, rapid, point-of-care test for **Urinary Tract Infections**) has won the **Longitude Prize on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**.

About the PA-100 Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (AST) System

- It is an **automated analyser** that combines phase contrast **microscopy and nanofluidics** to make available antibiograms, for the **first time, at the point of care**.
- It relies on **nanofluidics to perform rapid AST**, and uses the most advanced phenotypic diagnostic performance possible.
- Cell growth is monitored in real time using **contrast phase microscopy**.
 - ♦ Resistant bacteria keep a higher growth rate during incubation, while susceptible ones grow slowly or lyse.
- It provides **targeted antibiotic treatment in less than one hour**, reducing the risk of AMR.



*AST results are available at either 30 or 45 minutes after the start

- It has been evaluated with the **most common uropathogenic bacterial species** in uncomplicated UTI:
 - ♦ **Gram negative:** Escherichia coli, Klebsiella pneumonia, Proteus mirabilis;
 - ♦ **Gram positive:** Staphylococcus saprophyticus, Enterococcus faecalis;

Urinary Tract Infections (UTI)

- These are one of the most common **bacterial infections** and also one of the driving **causes of antibiotic prescription worldwide**.
- Bacteria in the urine are trapped in **over 10,000 microfluidic traps in parallel arrays** and exposed to five different antibiotics at five different concentrations.

- **Five commonly prescribed antibiotics** for the treatment of uncomplicated UTI are tested: **amoxicillin/clavulanic acid, ciprofloxacin, fosfomycin, nitrofurantoin and trimethoprim.**
- Due to the limited availability of point-of-care diagnostics, empiric treatment is standard in many settings.
 - ◆ Due to the high incidence of the disease, empiric UTI treatment fuels antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Do You Know?

- **Antibiotic-resistant** infections killed nearly **1.3 million people globally in 2019** and are on course to cause **10 million deaths a year by 2050, outstripping deaths caused by cancer.**
- The **global economy may lose up to 4 trillions by 2030** and up to **100 trillions by 2050** due to the AMR crisis.

Source: TH

TRUENAT PLATFORM

Context

- Recently, the **Truenat platform** has been hailed for its role in **combating TB** at the 77th **World Health Assembly in Geneva**, a **decision-making body of WHO.**

About the Truenat Platform

- It was developed by **Goa-based Molbio Diagnostics**, is a ground-breaking innovation in the **field of molecular diagnostics.**
- Truenat is a **real-time quantitative micro-PCR system.**
- It is a **portable, battery-operated machine** that can be deployed at labs, health centres, and even in the field that can **test for over 40 diseases**, including Covid-19, HCV, HBV, HIV, HPV, dengue, malaria, influenza, herpes, typhoid, and TB.

Game-Changer in TB Diagnostics

- The platform provides a rapid molecular test for the **diagnosis of pulmonary, extrapulmonary, and rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis.** The **Global Fund**, which collaborates with the WHO to build stronger health systems across the globe, appreciated India's commitment to eliminating TB by creating mass awareness, and intensive monitoring programmes using digital technologies.

Tuberculosis in India

- According to the **India TB report 2024**, the incidence rate in India had **fallen** from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 199 per lakh population in 2022, while the mortality rate had declined from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 23 per lakh population in 2022.
 - ◆ India's efforts to ensure early tuberculosis detection and treatment initiation, along with a host of community engagement efforts has resulted in a **decline of 16% in TB incidence** (new cases emerging each year) and a **18% reduction in mortality due to TB**, since 2015.

Initiatives

- National Strategic Plan (2017-2025);
- National TB Elimination Program (NTEP);
- National Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases (NITRD);
- Drug Sensitive-TB Treatment as per National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP);
- Ni-kshay Portal;

Source: TH

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF KARGIL WAR VICTORY

Context

- As part of the **25th year celebration of Kargil war victory** over Pakistan, a team of the Indian Army has embarked on a **pan-India motorcycle expedition** from **Dhanuskhodi (Tamil Nadu) to Dras (UT of Ladakh).**

About the Kargil War

- The Kargil War, fought from **May to July 1999** in the **Kargil region** and elsewhere along the **Line of Control (LoC)**, was a testament to the resilience and bravery of the Indian armed forces.
- It commenced **shortly after the signing of the Lahore declaration in 1999**, when the Pakistan Army surreptitiously occupied the winter-vacated posts of the Indian Army.
- The conflict was triggered by the infiltration of Pakistani troops — disguised as Kashmiri militants — into strategic positions on the Indian side of the LoC.

- The Indian Army, later supported by the Indian Air Force, recaptured a majority of the positions on the Indian side of the LoC.

Operation Vijay

- In India, the **conflict is also referred to as Operation Vijay**, which was the codename of the Indian military operation in the region.
- The Indian Air Force acted jointly with the Indian Army to flush out the Pakistan Army and paramilitary troops from vacated Indian positions along the LoC.
 - ♦ It was a unique display of bravery, resolve, and commitment under inhospitable conditions of terrain and weather.

Aftermath

- The war came to an **end on 26 July 1999**, marking a **significant victory for India**.
- Ever since the victory in Operation Vijay, 26 July is celebrated as the **'Kargil Vijay Diwas'** every year.

Source: TH

GST COUNCIL

In News

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is likely to consider a review of 28% tax on online gaming.

GST Council

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is a constitutional body established under Article 279A of the Indian Constitution through the 101st Amendment Act of 2016.
- The Union Finance Minister is the Chairperson of the GST Council.
- The GST Council makes recommendations to the Union and the States on key GST-related issues, including:
 - ♦ Taxes, cesses, and surcharges to be subsumed under GST
 - ♦ Goods and services to be subject to or exempt from GST
 - ♦ Model GST laws, principles of levy, and apportionment of IGST
 - ♦ Tax rates, thresholds, special provisions, and any other matter relating to GST

- **Dispute resolution:** The Council also serves as a platform to resolve disputes between the Centre and the States or among the States themselves on GST-related matters.
- The Centre has **one-third of the total voting power**, while the States collectively have two-thirds.
- A recent Supreme Court ruling has clarified that the recommendations of the GST Council are not binding on either Parliament or state legislatures.

Source: ET

FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT – INDIA (FIU-IND)

In News

- The Financial Intelligence Unit has fined Axis Bank for “failing” to put in place a mechanism to detect and report suspicious transactions in the name of counter-terrorist commando force NSG.

About FIU-IND

- Established in 2004 under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
- An independent body reporting directly to the **Economic Intelligence Council (EIC)** headed by the **Finance Minister**.
- Responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing, and disseminating information related to suspect financial transactions.
- Plays a pivotal role in India's anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) efforts.
- Works closely with various domestic and international agencies to combat financial crimes.

Source: TH

GREATER ADJUTANT STORK

In Context

- The greater adjutant stork also known as 'Garuda', one of the most endangered bird species, is facing severe threats due to rapid urbanization in Assam.
 - ♦ The Greater Adjutant Stork is also known as the “Hargila” in Assam, India.
 - ♦ They are known for their ability to soar high in the sky for long periods.

About

- **Scientific Name:** *Leptoptilos dubius*
- **Genus:** Part of the stork family, Ciconiidae, which includes about 20 species of large, long-necked birds.
- **Habitat:** Historically found across southern Asia and mainland Southeast Asia.
- Now mainly confined to small regions, primarily in Assam, India.
- There are three known breeding sites: one in Cambodia and two in India (Assam and Bihar).
- In Assam, they inhabit the Brahmaputra valley, especially in Guwahati, Morigaon, and Nagaon districts.
- In Bihar, a smaller population is found around Bhagalpur.

Protection Status:

- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule IV

Diet:

- Primarily carnivorous.
- Feeds on fish, frogs, snakes, other reptiles, eels, birds, offal, and carrion.
- Exhibits scavenging behavior similar to vultures.

Significance:

- Regarded as the mount of Vishnu, a major deity in Hinduism. Revered by some as "Garuda Maharaj" (Lord Garuda) or "Guru Garuda" (Great Teacher Garuda).
- Assists farmers by killing rats and other farm pests.

Conservation:

- Several conservation organizations are working to protect the Greater Adjutant Stork, including the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and the Assam Forest Department.
- Efforts include habitat restoration, captive breeding programs, and community education initiatives.

Source: TH**MERCY PETITION****In News**

- President Droupadi has turned down the mercy petition of a terrorist who was sentenced to death in the December 2000 Red Fort attack.

About Mercy Petition

- **Article 72:** Grants the President of India the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment, or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offense.
 - ♦ In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial.
 - ♦ In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends.
 - ♦ In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.
- **Article 161:** Provides similar powers to the Governor of a state.
 - ♦ There is no time limit given in these two Articles for Mercy Plea.
 - ♦ These Articles have no binding effect on the President and the Governors of the states to accept all the Mercy Petitions.

Source: TH**ENTEROBACTER BUGANDENSIS****In News**

- A recent study by IIT Madras and NASA discovered a dangerous bacteria called **Enterobacter bugandensis** on the **International Space Station (ISS)**.

About

- This bacteria is known for causing **hard-to-treat infections in hospitals**. In the unique conditions of space, like zero gravity and increased radiation, the bacteria changed and became even more difficult to treat with antibiotics.

Multidrug-resistant organisms

- Multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) are bacteria that have developed resistance to multiple antibiotics, making them difficult to treat. These bacteria are often called "superbugs" because they can cause infections that are easy to spread and hard to cure.

Source: TH