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The Situation of Government Jobs

Why in news?

The PM has ordered a million central government posts to be filled in mission mode over the next 18 months.

What is the current picture of employment in India?

- The unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of unemployed persons in the labour force.
- Battered by demonetisation, pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the Indian economy has started showing some signs of revival now.
- **PLFS data**- The annual report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey for July 2020 to June 2021 showed that the unemployment rate eased to 4.2% from 4.8% in 2019-20.
- The unemployment rate was higher for males in rural areas than females.
- In urban areas, the situation is quite opposite as unemployment rate was higher for females than males.
- The labour force participation rate (LFPR), or those working or seeking or available for work in the labour force, was the highest in four years at 39.3% in 2020-21.
- **CMIE data**- However, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, the unemployment rate in the country stands at 7.83% in April 2022.
- India is still far behind the US, China and others in public sector employment.

PLFS is launched by National Statistical Office (NSO) since 2017 whereas CMIE is a leading business information company that was established in 1976, primarily as an independent think tank.

What is the current strength of the Centre's human resources?

- The Union Budget 2022-23 estimated the strength of central government employees at 34.65 lakh as on March 1, 2022.
- According to the Annual Report of the Department of Expenditure (2019-20), approximately 21.75% of the sanctioned posts were vacant as on March 1, 2020.
- The Indian Railways is the biggest government employer with 12.52 lakh employees as of March 1, 2020.
- Almost 92% of the central government's manpower is employed by
 - Railways (almost 40%)

- Home Affairs (almost 30%)
- Defence (Civil) (nearly 12%)
- Department of Posts (almost 5.50%)
- Department of Revenue (more than 3%)
- Also, a large number of employees have been hired on contract as per the recommendations especially of the last two Pay Commissions.

What are the major recruitment bodies?

- The UPSC and SSC are the two main recruiters of central government personnel.
- UPSC makes Group A and Group B recruitments.
- SSC recruits for all Group B (Non-Gazetted) and Group C (Non-Technical) posts in central Ministries/ Departments and their attached and subordinate offices among others.
- Twenty one RRBs recruit mainly Group C personnel for Railways.
- The Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) is engaged to recruit for nationalised and Regional Rural Banks.

Does the government's 18 month deadline make sense?

- **Lack of framework**- The move doesn't appear to have any framework for recruitment in the various ministries and departments (except the Agnipath scheme in the armed forces).
- **Concerns with the deadline**- The 18-month deadline raises suspicion about the feasibility in achieving the target.
- **No clear idea**- The vacancies of the right kind in government/PSUs need to be identified and the skill-sets necessary in a candidate to fill these should be clearly defined.
- **Expenditure burden**- An ill-considered addition to the workforce will end up creating a burden for future governments, shrinking room for development expenditure.

What is the need of the hour?

- The government should examine the feasibility of replacing the system of permanent employment with a liberal contractual system, based on periodic performance-based reviews.
- With technology offering solutions to replace humans in monotonous jobs, the government should gradually move towards recruiting only for the skilled jobs in its ranks.
- This is the only possible way forward to keep its salaries and pensions bills in check even while adding to the workforce.

References

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