

CURRENT AFFAIRS

15 OCTOBER 2022



TOPIC:ELECTION

Will electoral bonds reveal the source of funds, SC asks Centre

Electoral Bonds

- ✓ State Bank of India is authorised to issue and encash these bonds.
- ✓ Electoral bonds are purchased anonymously by donors and are valid for 15 days from the date of issue.
- ✓ As debt instruments, these can be bought by donors from a bank, and the political party can then encash them.
- ✓ These can be redeemed only by an eligible party by depositing the same in its designated account maintained with a bank.

- ✓ The bonds are issued by SBI in denominations of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
- ✓ The bonds are available for purchase by any citizen of India for a period of ten days each in the months of January, April, July and October as may be specified by the Central Government.

Eligibility:

- ✓ Only the political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and have secured not less than 1% of the votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly, are eligible to receive electoral bonds.

TOPIC: INFLATION

Wholesale inflation cooled to 10.7% in Sept.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Wholesale price inflation dropped from 12.4% in August to 10.7% in September, the lowest in a year-and-a-half, with food price rise easing to a 10-month low from almost double-digit levels a month earlier even though vegetables and cereals prices shot up.

September marks the 18th month in a row that wholesale price inflation has stayed above 10%, but is the fourth straight month that wholesale inflation has eased after hitting a record high of 16.63% in May, with June reporting 16.23%. July's wholesale inflation rate was revised upwards from 13.93% estimated earlier to 14.07%.

Vegetables inflation zoomed to 39.7% in September from 22.3% in August, with potato inflation surging to 49.8%. Cereals inflation also inched up from 11.8% to 11.9%, with wheat inflation hitting 16.09%. Inflation in fruits cooled to 4.55% from 31.7%, as did manufactured food products', which dropped to 3% from 5.6%.

Wholesale Price Index

- ✓ It measures the changes in the prices of goods sold and traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses.
- ✓ Published by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ✓ It is the most widely used inflation indicator in India.
- ✓ The base year of All-India WPI has been revised from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017.

TOPIC: MONETARY POLICY

'Risky to lift repo rate above neutral when growth fragile'

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Jayanth Varma had suggested that the RBI should raise the policy repo rate to 6% [rather than the 5.90% that was achieved by the MPC's decision to raise the rate by 50 basis points] and then take a pause to allow time for the policy rate to get transmitted, the minutes of the September 28-30

meeting of the MPC show.

"A pause is needed after this hike because monetary policy acts with lags," Mr. Varma said at the meeting, the minutes released on Friday show. "It may take 3-4 quarters for the ... rate to be transmitted to the real economy, and the peak effect may take as long as 5-6 quarters."

Emphasising that it was dangerous to push the policy rate well above the neutral rate in an environment

where the growth outlook was very fragile, he said while the level of economic output had recovered to pre-pandemic levels, it remained well below the pre-pandemic trend line.

"If we raise the repo rate to around 6% at this meeting, that would be a cumulative increase of around two percentage points in just four months," he said, adding the MPC needed to guard against high rates hurting investment revival.

✓ A repurchase agreement, also known as a repo, RP, or sale and repurchase agreement, is a form of short-term borrowing, mainly in government securities. The dealer sells the underlying security to investors and, by agreement between the two parties, buys them back shortly afterwards, usually the following day, at a slightly higher price.

TOPIC:DEVELOPEMENT

Global Hunger Index is out, India in 'serious' category at rank 107

The country ranks below Sri Lanka (64), Nepal (81), Bangladesh (84) and Pakistan (99); Afghanistan is the only South Asian country that lags behind India in the listing

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

India ranks 107 out of 121 countries on the Global Hunger Index in which it fares worse than all countries in South Asia barring war-torn Afghanistan.

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels. GHI scores are based on the values of four component indicators - undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting and child mortality. Countries are divided into five categories of hunger on the basis of their score, which are 'low', 'moderate', 'serious', 'alarming' and 'extremely alarming'.

Based on the values of the four indicators, a GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale reflecting the severity of hunger, where zero is the best score (no hunger) and 100

Food for thought

India's score of 29.1 in the 2022 Global Hunger Index falls under the "serious" category in the hunger meter. It ranked 107 out of the 121 countries analysed below Rwanda and Ethiopia

| | | 29.1 | | |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| <= 9.9 low | 10-19.9 moderate | 20-34.9 serious | 35-49.9 alarming | >= 50 extremely alarming |
| Rankings | Country | | | |
| 102 | Rwanda | | 106 | Sudan |
| 103 | Nigeria | | 107 | India |
| 104 | Ethiopia | | 108 | Zambia |
| 105 | Republic of Congo | | 109 | Afghanistan |
| | | | 110 | Timor-Leste |

is the worst. India's score of 29.1 places it in the 'serious' category. India also ranks below Sri Lanka (64), Nepal (81), Bangladesh (84), and Pakistan (99). Afghanistan (109) is the only country in South Asia that performs worse than India on the index. China is among the countries collectively ranked between 1 and 17 having a score of less than five.

India's child wasting rate (low weight for

height), at 19.3%, is worse than the levels recorded in 2014 (15.1%) and even 2000 (17.15), and is the highest for any country in the world and drives up the region's average owing to India's large population.

Prevalence of undernourishment, which is a measure of the proportion of the population facing chronic deficiency of dietary energy intake, has also risen in the country from 14.6% in 2018-2020 to

16.3% in 2019-2021. This translates into 224.3 million people in India considered undernourished.

But India has shown improvement in child stunting, which has declined from 38.7% to 35.5% between 2014 and 2022, as well as child mortality which has also dropped from 4.6% to 3.3% in the same comparative period. On the whole, India has shown a slight worsening with its GHI score increasing from 28.2 in 2014 to 29.1 in 2022. Though the GHI is an annual report, the rankings are not comparable across different years. The GHI score for 2022 can only be compared with scores for 2000, 2007 and 2014.



In Focus podcast |
Does the Global Hunger Index ranking reflect India's hunger and nutrition levels?
bit.ly/3S2D4hu

TOPIC:SPACE

Smash hit

NASA's DART gives hope that science can ward off extraterrestrial threats

For the very first time, NASA scientists have succeeded in slightly altering the trajectory of an asteroid by using a spacecraft to slam into it. On September 27, 4.44 a.m. IST, a small spacecraft DART (Double Asteroid Redirection Test) was aimed at a 160-metre-wide asteroid Dimorphos, which was orbiting a larger asteroid Didymos, both of which were circling the sun, 11.2 million kilometres from the earth. Since neither body would have come closer than about 6.4 million km of the earth in their lifetime, they did not pose any threat. However, DART was a test mission to see if this technique, known as kinetic impactor, would give the necessary 'nudge' to an asteroid and alter its course by a desired amount. After studying the two bodies for nearly 10 days, NASA announced that the course of the smaller asteroid has indeed been altered a little: initially, the orbit of Dimorphos around Didymos took 11 hours and 55 minutes. After the impact, a 32-minute alteration in its orbital period has taken place – it is now 11 hours and 23 minutes only. The reason for this test is to learn how to use the kinetic impactor technique to 'nudge' earth-bound asteroids out of the way, years before impact. This is not a last-minute effort. A word of caution: all asteroids are not similar, so more tests have to be done to perfect this technique.

DART:

- ✓ DART is a low-cost spacecraft
- ✓ The mission is to test the new technology to be prepared in case an asteroid heads towards Earth in the future.
- ✓ The aim is to test the newly developed technology that would allow a spacecraft to crash into an asteroid and change its course.
- ✓ The target of the spacecraft is a small moonlet called Dimorphos (Greek for “two forms”).
- ✓ Dimorphos orbits a larger asteroid named Didymos (Greek for “twin”).
- ✓ It is a suicide mission and the spacecraft will be completely destroyed.

TOPIC: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Do not ignore the role of the woman livestock farmer

The livestock sector is one of the most rapidly growing components of the rural economy of India, accounting for 5% of national income and 28% of agricultural GDP in 2018-19. In the last six years, the livestock sector grew at 7.9% (at constant prices) while crop farming grew by 2%. Our field studies show that in rural households that own livestock, women are invariably engaged in animal rearing. On the International Day of Rural Women (October 15), we need to recognise the role of women in livestock rearing, and to include women in all facets of livestock development, be it breeding, veterinary care, extension services, training or access to credit and markets.

It is widely recognised that the majority of women workers in rural areas (72%) are engaged in agricultural activities. However, with the exception of participation in dairy co-operatives, specifically in milk marketing, women's role in the livestock economy is not as widely known or discussed. There were five million women members in dairy co-operatives in 2015-16, and this increased further to 5.4 million in 2020-21. Women accounted for 31% of all members of dairy producer cooperatives in 2020-21. In India, the number of women's dairy cooperative societies rose from 18,954 in 2012 to 32,092 in 2015-16.

Issues with data collection

Conventional labour force surveys fail to accurately record women's work in livestock-rearing for many reasons. Among the many problems in data collection, two significant ones are the sporadic nature of work undertaken for short spells throughout the day and often carried out within the homestead, and women's own responses. A time use survey in a village of Karnataka showed that a poor peasant woman started her day by collecting dung from the cow shed for 10 minutes (5.15 a.m. to 5.25 a.m.). She engaged in some preparatory cooking tasks for a while. A little later she milked the cow for 25 minutes, and swept and washed the shed for



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Further, women need to be included in all facets of livestock development — breeding, veterinary care, extension services, training or access to credit and markets

around 30 minutes. After completing other household tasks, she went to work on a construction site. She took two cows along and tied them to graze near the work site. When she returned home in the evening, she again milked the animals and fed them, which took around 40 minutes. After dinner, she fed the animals for the last time in the day. This woman spent around 3.5 hours on livestock-related tasks, which were all combined with household duties. Given this pattern of work, the woman herself may not report "livestock raising" as an economic activity.

One way to adjust official statistics for this error is by calculating an augmented work participation rate. In other words, in addition to women reporting themselves as engaged in economic activity, this estimate includes women who reported themselves as "engaged in domestic duty" or care work for the major part of the year but spent time on specific activities such as kitchen gardening, household dairy/poultry, paddy husking, etc.

An underestimation

To illustrate, 12 million rural women were workers in livestock-raising, an estimate based on the Employment and Unemployment Survey of 2011-12. However, with the augmented definition, we estimated that around 49 million rural women were engaged in livestock raising. In short, women actually engaged in the livestock economy were four times the official estimate and a sizeable section of the rural population. Statistics from India's first national Time Use Survey in 2019 corroborate this finding. By recording all activities done in the past 24 hours (be it cooking or working in the fields), 11% of rural women or 48 million women were engaged in animal rearing.

Data from village surveys conducted by the Foundation for Agrarian Studies in Karnataka show that in every household that owned a milch animal, a woman spent at least two hours a day on animal rearing. This was as much as seven to eight hours in some cases depending on other factors such as number and type of animals, and season (in the lean season, when fodder was not easily available, more time was spent on grazing). Additionally, livestock rearing was an occupation of older, less educated, women in the village.

The National Livestock Policy (NLP) of 2013, aimed at increasing livestock production and productivity in a sustainable manner, rightly states that around 70% of the labour for the livestock sector comes from women. One of the goals of this policy was the empowerment of women. The National Livestock Mission (NLM) of 2014-15 was initiated for the development of the

livestock sector with a focus on the availability of feed and fodder, providing extension services, and improved flow of credit to livestock farmers. However, the NLM does not propose any schemes or programmes specific to women livestock farmers. The policy proposes that the State government allocates 30% of funds from centrally-sponsored schemes for women. There is no logic for the 30% quota.

Core problems

The problem clearly is that women livestock farmers are not visible to policymakers, and one reason is the lack of gender-disaggregated data, as illustrated here.

First, recent employment surveys such as the Periodic Labour Force Survey fail to collect data on specific activities of persons engaged primarily in domestic duties. So, the undercounting of women in the livestock economy continues.

Second, the reach of extension services to women livestock farmers remains scarce.

According to official reports, 80,000 livestock farmers were trained across the country in 2021, but we have no idea how many were women farmers. In our village surveys, only a few women in each village reported receiving any information from extension workers. Women wanted information but wanted it nearer home and at times when they were free.

Third, in our village surveys, women in poor households, without collateral to offer to banks, found it difficult to avail loans to purchase livestock. Around 15 lakh new Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) were provided to livestock farmers under the KCC scheme during 2020-22. There is no information on how many of them were women farmers.

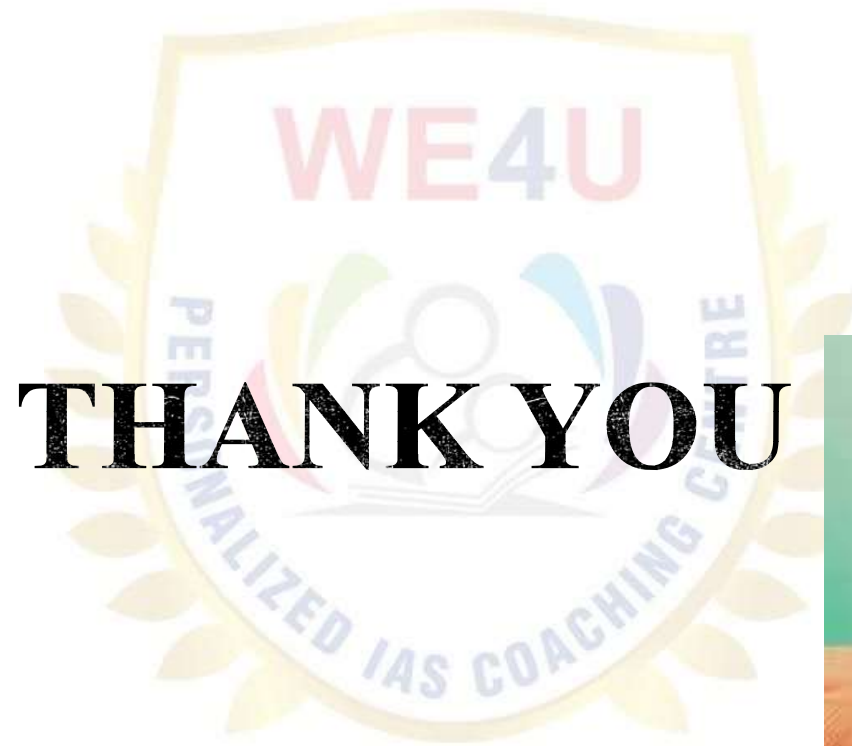
Fourth, women livestock farmers lacked technical knowledge on choice of animals (breeding) and veterinary care. According to our village surveys, men invariably performed these specific tasks and took animals for artificial insemination.

Fifth, our village studies showed that women were not aware of the composition and functions of dairy boards and that men exercised decisions even in women-only dairy cooperatives. Further, the voice of women from landless or poor peasant Scheduled Caste households was rarely heard.

Women's labour is critical to the livestock economy. It follows then that women should be included in every stage of decision-making and development of the livestock sector. Today, women livestock workers remain invisible on account of their absence in official statistics. This must be corrected.



M. KICCHERY



THANK YOU

