

Labour force participation is up, unemployment is down. What about the quality of work?

The issue of jobs has been **at the heart of** economic policy discussion, especially in recent **decades** when the **link** between economic growth and employment generation **has** been seen to be rather **tenuous**. The pandemic has been a major **trigger** of economic **disruption**, causing **widespread** financial **distress**, touching off a **surge** in unemployment and **leading to** mass **migration** back to villages. **Seen against this backdrop**, the latest periodic labour force survey for 2022-23 **throws up** several interesting trends. As per the survey, the labour force participation rate has continued to rise across the country. **Alongside**, the unemployment rate has continued to decline. This should, **on the face of it**, be **indicative** of an improvement in the labour market. However, the survey also documents a decline in the share of regular wage/salaried employment and a rise in self-employment. These trends require closer examination.

At the all-India level, the labour force participation rate (15 years and above) has increased from 49.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 57.9 per cent in 2022-23. While participation rates have increased in both rural and urban areas, the rise is to a much greater **extent** in the former. Much of this increase has been **driven** by females, whose **participation rate** in rural areas **has** risen from 24.6 per cent in 2017-18 to 41.5 per cent in 2022-23 — an increase of roughly 17 percentage points over this period. While this should be **encouraging**, **considering** the low levels of female participation in the country, some have suggested that this rise in participation is indicative of the economic distress in rural areas, which is pushing women to work **in order to augment** their family incomes. After all, **work** under **MGNREGA**, where wages are lower than in other non-farm occupations, **has** seen a **steady uptick** over the years (even excluding the pandemic years of 2020-21 and 2021-22), and women person days under the programme have also been **steadily** rising.

Alongside this increase in labour force participation rates, **the share** of the self-employed **has** risen from 55.6 per cent in 2020-21 to 57.3 per cent in 2022-23, while the **share** of regular wage/salaried employed **has** fallen from 21.1 per cent to 20.9 per cent. The **percentage** of workers engaged in informal sector enterprises in the non-agricultural sector **has** also gone up from 71.4 per cent in 2020-21 to 74.3 per cent in 2022-23. While unemployment rates have declined **across board**, and among the youth (those in the age group of 15-29 years), this falling share of regular wage/salaried and rise in self-employment **reinforces** concerns that the economy is unable to generate sufficient **productive** and **remunerative** forms of employment to absorb the millions entering the labour force each year. Inadequate job creation was, and still remains, the biggest challenge **confronting policymakers**.

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **At the heart of** (phrase) – At the core of, central to, fundamentally involved in, essentially linked to, basically connected with मुख्य रूप से
2. **Decade** (noun) – Period of Ten-year period दशक
3. **Tenuous** (adjective) – Weak, fragile, feeble, insubstantial, flimsy कमजोर
4. **Trigger** (noun) – Stimulus, spark, catalyst, impetus प्रेरक
5. **Disruption** (noun) – Interruption, disturbance, break, disorder विघ्न
6. **Widespread** (adjective) – Extensive, ubiquitous, prevalent, pervasive व्यापक
7. **Distress** (noun) – difficulty caused by lack of money वित्तीय
8. **Surge** (noun) – Rise, upsurge, increase, upswing वृद्धि
9. **Lead** (to) (verb) – Result in, cause, bring about, produce, give rise to वजह बनना
10. **Migration** (noun) – Movement, relocation, resettlement प्रवास
11. **Seen against the backdrop** (phrase) – In light of, in the context of, against the setting of, in relation to के संदर्भ में
12. **Throw up** (phrasal verb) – Produce, yield, give rise to, generate उत्पन्न करना
13. **Alongside** (adverb) – Beside, by the side, next to के बगल में
14. **On the face of it** (phrase) – Apparently, seemingly, outwardly, superficially ऊपरी तौर पर
15. **Indicative** (adjective) – Suggestive, representative, revealing सूचक
16. **Extent** (noun) – Range, scope, magnitude, degree सीमा, हद
17. **Drive** (verb) – Propel, push, prompt, motivate प्रेरित करना
18. **Encouraging** (adjective) – Promising, optimistic, hopeful प्रोत्साहक
19. **Considering** (preposition) – Taking into account, bearing in mind, given ध्यान में रखते हुए
20. **In order to** (phrase) – To, so as to, for the purpose of इसलिए कि
21. **Augment** (verb) – Increase, enhance, amplify, boost बढ़ाना
22. **MGNREGA** (noun) – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an Indian law that aims to guarantee the 'right to work' and ensure livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days

of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

23. **Steady** (adjective) – Stable, unchanging, consistent, unwavering स्थिर

24. **Uptick** (noun) – Increase, rise, growth इजाफा

25. **Steadily** (adverb) – Constantly, consistently, unswervingly धीरे धीरे

26. **Across board** (phrase) – uniformly, without exception, all-inclusively, comprehensively, without distinction समान रूप से

27. **Reinforce** (verb) – strengthen, fortify, bolster, support मजबूत करना

28. **Productive** (adjective) – fruitful, effective, efficient, yield-bearing फलप्रद

29. **Remunerative** (adjective) – profitable, gainful, rewarding, lucrative लाभकारी

30. **Confront** (verb) – face, challenge, oppose, tackle सामना करना

31. **Policymaker** (noun) – decision-maker, regulator, planner, strategist नीति निर्माता

Summary of the Editorial

1. The relationship between economic growth and job creation has been weak in recent decades.
2. The pandemic caused economic disruptions, increased unemployment, and led to mass migration to villages.
3. The 2022-23 periodic labour force survey reveals rising labour force participation rates across India.
4. The unemployment rate has also seen a decline, suggesting an improving labour market.
5. However, there's a noted decrease in regular wage/salaried employment and an increase in self-employment.
6. Labour force participation for those aged 15 and above rose from 49.8% in 2017-18 to 57.9% in 2022-23.
7. The increase is more pronounced in rural areas, and largely driven by females.
8. Female participation in rural areas jumped from 24.6% in 2017-18 to 41.5% in 2022-23, a rise of approximately 17 percentage points.
9. The significant rise in female workforce participation may indicate economic distress in rural areas, pushing women to contribute to family income.
10. Employment under MGNREGA, which offers lower wages than other non-farm jobs, has consistently increased, with a rise in women person days.
11. Self-employment grew from 55.6% in 2020-21 to 57.3% in 2022-23, while regular wage/salaried jobs decreased slightly.
12. Workers in informal sector enterprises within the non-agricultural sector rose from 71.4% in 2020-21 to 74.3% in 2022-23.
13. Despite declining unemployment rates, the shift from regular jobs to self-employment underscores concerns about the economy's ability to offer quality jobs.
14. The falling share of stable employment indicates the challenge of absorbing new entrants into productive jobs.
15. The primary challenge for policymakers remains insufficient job creation in the economy.

Practice Exercise: SSC Pattern Based

1. **Which of the following can be inferred about the increase in female labour force participation in rural areas?** [Editorial Page]
- A. It is a result of increasing opportunities for women in the urban sector.
 - B. It is solely due to the empowerment of women in rural areas.
 - C. It may indicate economic distress pushing women to work to supplement their family incomes.
 - D. It is mainly because of better educational opportunities for women in rural areas.
2. **According to the periodic labour force survey for 2022-23, how has the labour force participation rate (15 years and above) changed from 2017-18 to 2022-23 at the all-India level?**
- A. Decreased from 49.8% to 47.2%.
 - B. Remained constant at 49.8%.
 - C. Increased from 41.5% to 57.9%.
 - D. Increased from 49.8% to 57.9%.
3. **Based on the passage, which of the following can be inferred regarding the economic conditions of the country?**
- A. The economy is rapidly generating numerous high-paying job opportunities for everyone.
 - B. Even though unemployment rates are decreasing, the nature of employment is becoming less formal and more self-driven.
 - C. The youth are the primary reason for the increase in self-employment rates.
 - D. Policymakers are mainly focused on increasing the number of regular wage/salaried jobs.
4. **Which of the following statements is true based on the information provided in the passage?**
- A. The share of the self-employed decreased from 2020-21 to 2022-23.
 - B. In 2022-23, over 70% of workers were engaged in informal sector enterprises in the non-agricultural sector.
 - C. The unemployment rate among the youth increased from 2020-21 to 2022-23.
 - D. The economy has been successfully creating ample productive job opportunities for newcomers in the labour force.
5. **Which of the following best describes the tone of the passage?**
- A. Optimistic
 - B. Ambiguous
 - C. Analytical
 - D. Pessimistic
6. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
- A. That proper curing does not take place in the construction stage
 - B. The news these days seem to be about falling buildings
 - C. The obvious reasons are bad engineering, use of inferior-quality building material, and weak foundations
 - D. And then, passionate architects will aver
- A. BCDA B.BACD C.ACDB D.ADCB

7. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**

- A. A smart little boy who enjoyed school, his life was otherwise filled with bicycles, swimming, books, assembling dinosaurs and playing board games at which he excelled.
 B. About being bare-bodied for this major event
 C. A nine-year-old boy was being readied for his first visit to a famous temple in Kerala.
 D. A small brocaded dhoti was wrapped around his tubby waist and secured with a fastener, ignoring his protests
- A. DABC B. DBCA C.CDBA D. CBAD

8. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**

- A. Both the robbers' smiling pictures were beamed over TV screens within hours of the crime. They were promptly tracked down and arrested.
 B. Before leaving, Wheeler looked straight at the CCTV camera and smiled.
 C. He was sure that his face will not be recognised by the camera because he had dabbed a special formula on his face — lemon juice.
 D. On a cold January afternoon in 1995, McArthur Wheeler and Clifton Johnson walked into the cash counter of the Mellon Bank at Swissvale, Pittsburgh, pointed a semi-automatic gun at the cashier, and walked away with \$5,200 in cash.
- A. DACB B.BADC C. BCDA D.DBCA

9. **Some sentences are given below. While the first and the last sentences (1 and 2) are in the correct order, the sentences in between are jumbled up. Arrange the sentences in the correct order to form a meaningful and coherent paragraph.**

1. I started my professional journey 25 years ago by joining a Madras-headquartered instrumentation company.
 A. Being a Palghat Iyer, I did not wish to move beyond the familiar environs of Chennai, what with a lot of common features linking both places.
 B. But I did journey beyond this initial destination and spent time away
 C. In Delhi, Hyderabad and Kochi for professional reasons.
 D. At that time, my dream was to settle down in Madras.
2. Each stage in my life was fraught with complexities and insecurities but the common thread that kept me going was the possibility of being able to return one fine day.
- A. DABC B. DCBA C. ABCD D. ADCB

10. **Parts of the following sentence have been given as options. One of them may contain an error. Select the part that contains the error from the given options. If you don't find any error, mark 'No error' as your answer.**

You can fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time; but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

- A. No error
 B. You can fool some of the people all the time
 C. and all the people some of the time
 D. but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

11. Select the most appropriate **synonym** of the given word.

Diligent

- A. Spiteful
- B. Awful
- C. Faithful
- D. Careful

12. Select the most appropriate **ANTONYM** of the underlined word.

They live in the apartment above ours.

- A. Over
- B. After
- C. Upward
- D. Below

13. Select the most appropriate option that can substitute the underlined segment in the given sentence. If there is no need to substitute it, select 'No substitution'.

Many noticeable people were present at the function.

- A. No substitution
- B. noteworthy
- C. celebrity
- D. Notable

14. Select the most appropriate meaning of the given idiom.

Stir up a hornets' nest

- A. Provoke trouble
- B. Resist a fight
- C. Create doubts
- D. Scare the birds

15. Select the most appropriate **ANTONYM** of the underlined word in the given sentence.

Aditi is meticulous by nature.

- A. accurate
- B. precise
- C. careless
- D. Concise

Comprehension:

In the following passage, some words have been deleted. Read the passage carefully and select the most appropriate option to fill in each blank. The Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) or National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) Scheme has been formulated to (1)_____ IT training to 52.5 lakh persons, including Anganwadi and ASHA workers and authorised ration dealers in all the States/UTs (2) _____the country so that the non-IT literate citizens are (3) _____to become IT literate so as to (4)_____them to actively and effectively participate in the democratic and developmental process and also (5)_____their livelihood.

16. Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank No.1.

- A. attribute
- B. attain

- C. impart
- D. Affirm

17. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank No.2.**

- A. among
- B. within
- C. between
- D. Across

18. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank No.3.**

- A. included
- B. made
- C. ordered
- D. Trained

19. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank No.4.**

- A. enact
- B. able
- C. enable
- D. Regard

20. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank No.5.**

- A. present
- B. enhance
- C. engage
- D. train

Answers

1. C 2.D 3.B 4. B 5. C 6.A 7. C 8.D 9.A 10.A 11.D
 12. D 13.D 14.A 15.C 16.C 17.D 18.D 19.C 20.B

[Practice Exercise]

Explanations

1. C) The passage mentions, "While this should be encouraging, considering the low levels of female participation in the country, some have suggested that this rise in participation is indicative of the economic distress in rural areas, which is pushing women to work in order to augment their family incomes."
2. D) The passage explicitly states, "At the all-India level, the labour force participation rate (15 years and above) has increased from 49.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 57.9 per cent in 2022-23."
3. B) The passage mentions that while unemployment rates have decreased, the share of the self-employed has risen and that of regular wage/salaried employment has fallen. The increase in workers in the informal sector also supports this inference. Option (a) is opposite to the passage's tone, option (c) is not supported, and option (d) is not explicitly mentioned or inferred from the passage.
4. B) The passage explicitly states that "The percentage of workers engaged in informal sector enterprises in the non-agricultural sector has... gone up... to 74.3 per cent in 2022-23." Option (a) is the opposite of what the passage states, option (c) contradicts the information about declining unemployment rates, and option (d) contradicts the concerns raised about the economy's inability to generate sufficient productive forms of employment.
5. C) **Analytical**
 The passage thoroughly examines the data and trends associated with labour force participation and employment in recent years. While presenting the facts, it delves into the intricacies and implications of the data, seeking to understand the broader picture rather than merely presenting the findings. This reflective approach suggests an analytical tone.
6. A) **BCDA**
B: This sentence introduces a topic or current event about falling buildings, which serves as an ideal starting point.
C: Sentence B talks about a problem (falling buildings), and Sentence C provides the reasons for this problem. The phrase "The obvious reasons" in C directly refers to the issue mentioned in B, establishing a clear Noun-Pronoun relationship.
D: The connector "And then" in sentence D indicates a continuation or a further point following the previous sentence. It implies that after considering the "obvious reasons" (from C), there's an additional perspective or comment to be provided by "passionate architects."
A: Sentence D ends with the word "aver," which means to assert or affirm with confidence. Sentence A provides the specific assertion or affirmation made by the "passionate architects" from sentence D. The statement in A ("That proper curing does not take place in the construction stage") is what the architects are averring or asserting.
7. C) **CDBA**

C: Sentence C introduces "A nine-year-old boy." The subsequent sentences D, B, and A are based on this boy. The pronoun "his" in sentence D refers to the "nine-year-old boy" introduced in sentence C

D: Sentence D continues with the dressing of the boy for the temple visit.

B: The phrase "About being bare-bodied for this major event" in sentence B is a continuation of the idea introduced in sentence D about wrapping the dhoti around the boy's waist.

A: Sentence A provides additional background about the boy.

8. **D) DBCA**

D: Sentence D sets the scene and context. It gives a specific date ("January afternoon in 1995") and introduces the main characters involved ("McArthur Wheeler and Clifton Johnson"). This means D is likely the first sentence

B: Sentence B refers to "Wheeler" without any introduction, indicating that the character has already been mentioned. Since D introduces Wheeler, B should come after D.

C: Sentence C starts with the pronoun "He," referring back to "Wheeler" from sentence B. This suggests C follows B.

A: Sentence A tells us what happened as a result of the events in B and C: The robbers' pictures were shown on TV and they were arrested. This is a clear consequence of the previous events and thus comes last.

9. **A) DABC**

1: The given paragraph begins with sentence 1, so this is a given: "I started my professional journey 25 years ago by joining a Madras-headquartered instrumentation company."

D: Sentence D begins with "At that time, my dream was to settle down in Madras."

The connection here is the reference to "Madras" in both sentences. Thus, D logically follows 1 because it further elaborates on the narrator's aspirations and feelings towards Madras when they began their professional journey.

A: The transition is smooth as A continues the theme of the narrator's preference for staying in familiar surroundings, with Madras/Chennai being that familiar environment. The mention of "Palghat Iyer" gives context to why the narrator feels a deep connection to Chennai.

B: Sentence B starts with "But I did journey beyond this initial destination..."

The word "But" serves as a contrasting connector, indicating a deviation from the previous thought. After expressing a preference for Chennai, the narrator is now stating they did move beyond it, which contrasts with the sentiment in sentence A. Thus, B follows A

C: Sentence C begins with "In Delhi, Hyderabad and Kochi for professional reasons."

Sentence C completes the thought initiated in B by providing specific locations where the narrator spent their time. The places listed in C are the destinations mentioned in the incomplete thought of B.

10. A) No error

11. D) **Diligent** (adjective) – Careful, attentive, **सावधान**

Synonym: Careful (adjective) – Cautious, prudent, meticulous, thorough. सतर्क

- **Spiteful** (adjective) – Malicious, malevolent, hostile, nasty. द्वेषपूर्ण
- **Awful** (adjective) – Very bad, terrible, dreadful, unpleasant. भयानक
- **Faithful** (adjective) – Loyal, devoted, true, steadfast. विश्वासयोग्य

12. D) **Above** (preposition) – In extended space over and not touching. ऊपर

Antonym: **Below** (preposition) – At a lower level or layer than. नीचे

- **Over** (preposition) – Extending directly upward from; above. ऊपर
- **After** (preposition) – In the time following (an event or another period of time). बाद में
- **Upward** (adverb) – Towards a higher place or position. ऊपर की ओर

13. D) 'noticeable' के बदले 'Notable' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि यहाँ पर लोगों की पहचान या महत्व को दर्शाने के लिए 'Notable' शब्द सही है।

- **Notable** will be used instead of 'noticeable' because here the word is used to denote the recognition or importance of people.

14. A) **Stir up a hornets' nest** (idiom) – Provoke trouble परेशानी पैदा करना

15. C) **Meticulous** (adjective) – Showing great attention to detail; very careful and precise. अतिसावधान

Antonym: **Careless** (adjective) – Not giving sufficient attention or thought to details; negligent. लापरवाह

- **Accurate** (adjective) – Correct in all details; exact. सटीक
- **Precise** (adjective) – Marked by exactness and accuracy of expression or detail. सटीक
- **Concise** (adjective) – Giving a lot of information clearly and in a few words; brief but comprehensive. संक्षिप्त

16. C) 'Impart' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "impart" का अर्थ होता है जानकारी या शिक्षा देना। जबकि 'Attribute' का अर्थ है किसी गुण या विशेषता को किसी के साथ जोड़ना, 'Attain' का अर्थ है प्राप्त करना, और 'Affirm' का अर्थ है पुष्टि करना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Impart'** should be used because it means to give information or education. Whereas, 'Attribute' means to associate a quality or feature with someone, 'Attain' means to achieve, and 'Affirm' means to confirm, which don't fit in this context.

17. D) **'Across'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "across" का अर्थ होता है पूरे विस्तार में या किसी विशिष्ट क्षेत्र के सभी हिस्सों में। जबकि 'Among' का अर्थ है किसी समूह में, 'Within' का अर्थ है किसी

सीमा या सीमा के अंदर, और 'Between' का अर्थ है दो या दो से अधिक वस्तुओं, स्थलों या व्यक्तियों के बीच, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Across'** should be used because it means throughout or in every part of a particular area or place. Whereas, 'Among' means within a group, 'Within' means inside a particular limit or boundary, and 'Between' means in the interval or space separating two or more items, places, or people, which don't fit in this context.

18. D) **'Trained'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "trained" का अर्थ होता है प्रशिक्षित करना। जबकि 'Included' का अर्थ है शामिल करना, 'Made' का अर्थ है बनाना, और 'Ordered' का अर्थ है आदेश देना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

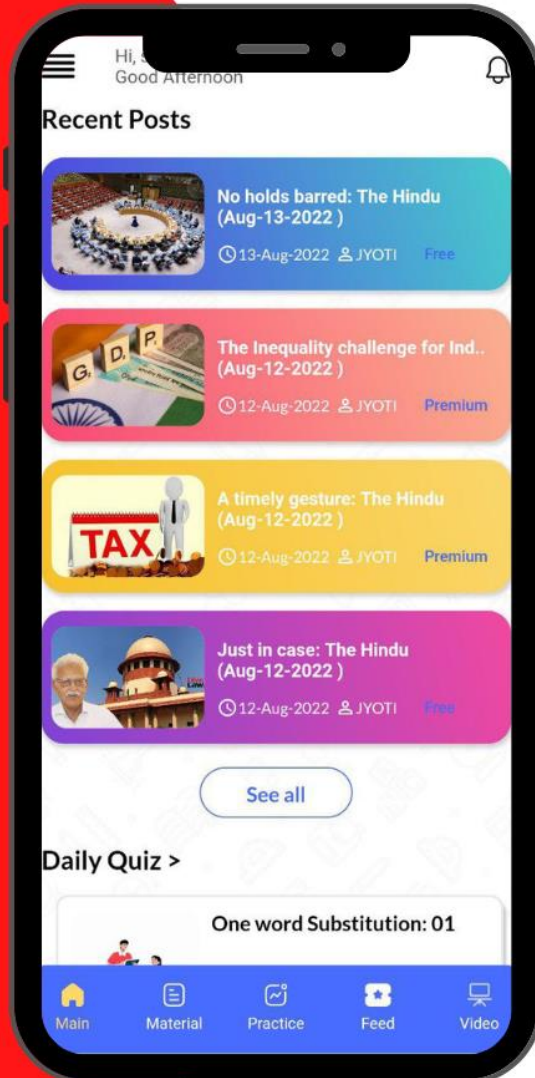
- **'Trained'** should be used because it means to instruct or teach a particular skill or type of behavior. Whereas, 'Included' means to incorporate, 'Made' means to create, and 'Ordered' means to give a command or direction, which don't fit in this context.

19. C) **'Enable'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "enable" का अर्थ होता है किसी को कुछ करने की क्षमता प्रदान करना। जबकि 'Enact' का अर्थ है कानून बनाना, 'Able' का अर्थ है समर्थ होना, और 'Regard' का अर्थ है ध्यान या सम्मान, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Enable'** should be used because it means to give someone the authority or means to do something. Whereas, 'Enact' means to make into law, 'Able' means having the power to do something, and 'Regard' implies attention or esteem, which don't fit in this context.

20. B) **'Enhance'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "enhance" का अर्थ होता है महत्व बढ़ाना या सुधारना। जबकि 'Present' का अर्थ है प्रस्तुत करना, 'Engage' का अर्थ है संलग्न होना या जुड़ना, और 'Train' का अर्थ है प्रशिक्षण देना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Enhance'** should be used because it means to improve or augment. Whereas, 'Present' means to show or introduce, 'Engage' means to involve or get occupied, and 'Train' implies giving training, which don't fit in this context.



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