

**1. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana as a poverty alleviation programme.****Approach**

Introduce with the context of pandemic amid which the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana was introduced. In next part write what are the benefits of the scheme and what are its limitations. In conclusion make a critical statement and suggest some remedies.

**Introduction**

COVID-19 pandemic forced all the economic activities to be shutdown amid the fear of its spread and mortality. This led to large scale migration of daily workers from cities towards their villages. These people neither had savings, nor access to welfare schemes or proper healthcare in the cities which led them to rush back to the villages. Thus to address the issue migrants government introduced 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna' on 26, March, 2020. This scheme has now been extended till November of year 2021 in view of second wave of COVID-19 and lagging economic recovery.

**Body**

About scheme

- PMGKAY is a part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.
- Its nodal Ministry is the Ministry of Finance.
- It was initially announced for a three month period (April, May and June 2020), covering 80 crore ration cardholders. Later it was extended till November 2020.
- However in April 2021, the government had announced its decision to restart the PMGKAY.
- The scheme aimed at providing each person who is covered under the National Food Security Act 2013 with an additional 5 kg grains (wheat or rice) for free, in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised food grain already provided through the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- The new version of the PMGKAY lacks one of its important components which was there in 2020 PMGKAY i.e free-of-cost 1 kg pulses per month to each household covered under the NFSA.

Positive Impacts of PM Garib Kalyan Yojana in alleviating poverty:

- It was the first step by the government when pandemic affected India. The scheme reached its targeted population feeding almost 80Cr people. These were further the groups which are most marginalised including mostly migrants, tribals, widows.

- It has proven to be more of a safety net to migrant people who had job and livelihood losses. Thus they were able to follow lockdown rules effectively without the need to worry about daily food requirements.
- Further the government by increasing the already existing allocation ensured that a family of 5 can easily sustain as earlier allocation might would not have been sufficient for whole family.
- This has also ensured nutrition security to children of the migrant workers. Thus the indicators of hunger will not be hampered in long run.
- This will also lead to savings in people's hand to spend on other essential services such as health and education.

#### Challenges of PM Garib Kalyan Yojana

- The effectiveness of PM Garib Kalyan will be more in states with well-functioning PDS. That is, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh and Odisha — but not Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. This will be counter productive as the main aim is to help the migrants which predominantly come from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- The scheme has been affected by widespread corruption, leakages and failure to distribute grain to the intended recipients.
- Several of the states above have claimed that the ineffective distribution has been caused by the beneficiaries, especially migrant workers, not being available to receive their rations.
- Out of the 79.25 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), only 55 crore have so far received their 5 kg.
- However, almost 90% of beneficiaries have received their regular subsidized grain for the month, raising questions over why the free grain has reached fewer beneficiaries.
- Many people were denied their share due to inability to access ration cards.
- Livelihood losses led to decline in aggregate demand and resulted into lowest ever consumption expenditure by the people owing to scarcity of cash.
- This in turn led to selling of the free grains obtained in the local markets for cash.

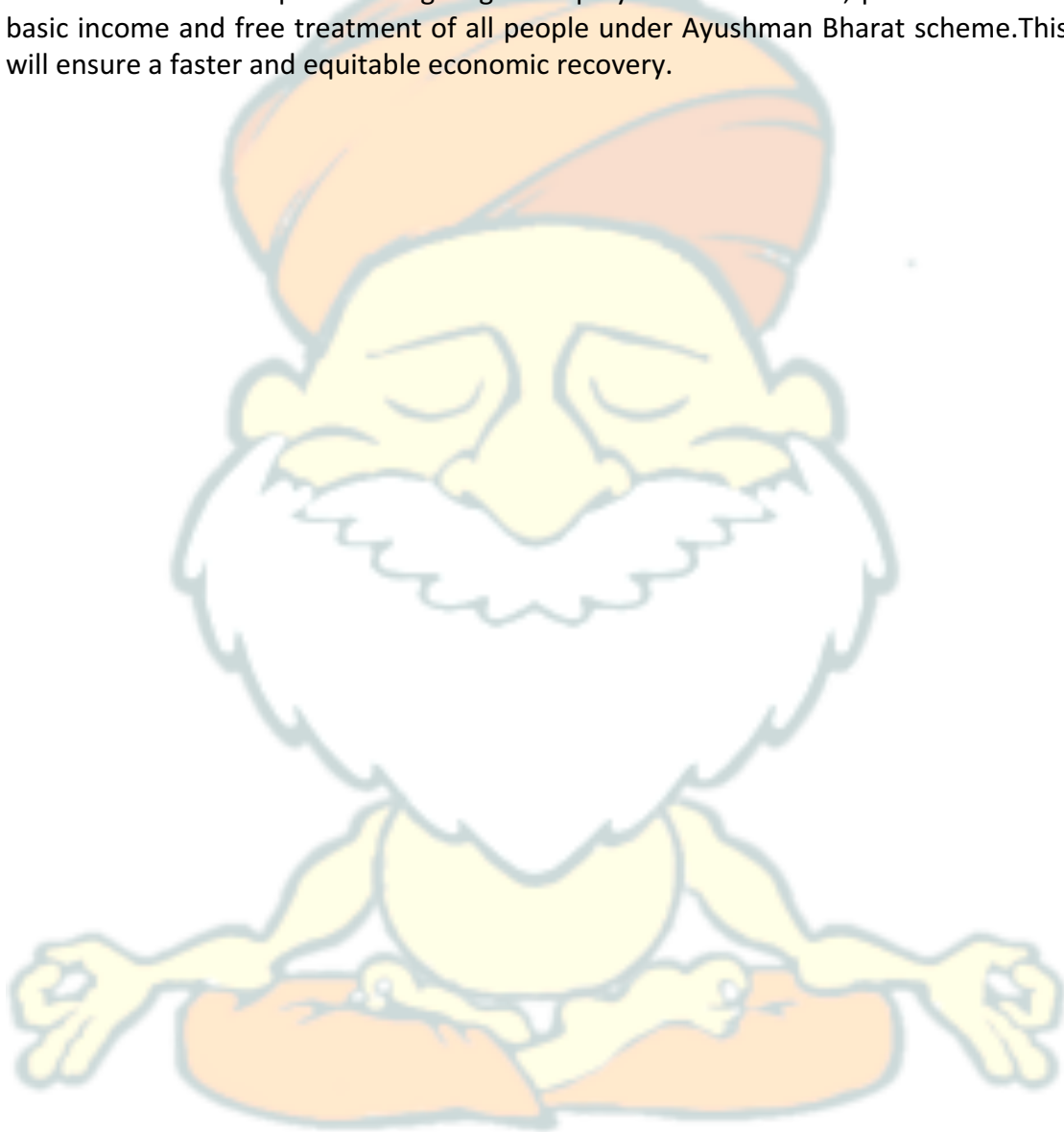
#### Way Forward

- There should be a all-encompassing database for migrant workers and their family. This should accurately capture the data on migration.
- The One Nation One Ration Card should be implemented in true spirit by all the states.
- Along with food security, there should be a sustainable income support through schemes like MGNREGA accompanied by free vaccines in nearest future.

- The leakages in PDS should be minimised through modernise PDS. To avoid leakages, there should be food-token system.

### **Conclusion**

Pradhan Mantri GaribKalyan Yojna is a well intentioned scheme to help the vulnerable sectors in this difficult times. But as compared to other nations economic packages, the scheme falls short to alleviate people from poverty. Therefore the government should take more steps such as giving unemployment allowances, partial Universal basic income and free treatment of all people under Ayushman Bharat scheme. This will ensure a faster and equitable economic recovery.



**2. How effective can be strategy of providing a universal basic income to the poor as a poverty alleviation measure in India? Critically evaluate while discussing its pros and cons.**

**Approach**

Introduce UBI in the current context of Indian economy. Then write its positive and limitations in current Indian scenario. At last conclude with taking a balanced path of qualified UBI and other supporting measures.

**Introduction**

The pandemic has caused unprecedented crises and disruptions around the world. It has inflicted the greatest pain on those who were already the most vulnerable, spurring hardship and unease among low-income families and micro-businesses. In the process, it uncovered existing inequities and created new ones. The crisis has once again brought to fore the idea of universal basic income (UBI)—periodic and unconditional cash payments to all citizens. The basic income idea has enjoyed a popular resurgence in recent years.

**Body**

Current context and the idea of universal basic income

- To deal with the economic inequality, unemployment and poverty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, many advocate Universal Basic Income (UBI) programme to be a solution. Read more on Coronavirus and its impact on the economy.
- In order to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, governments across the world have imposed measures like lockdown and social distancing. However, collateral damage has been caused by these measures to almost every sector of the economy, so much so that the International Monetary Fund- IMF held the current economic crisis could be the worst ever since the Great depression 1929.
- With almost 90% of India's workforce in the informal sector without minimum wages or social security, micro-level circumstances in India are worse than anywhere else. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the country was struggling to provide job opportunities for millions of job aspirants who were entering the job market. Read in detail about the Unemployment in India on the linked page.
- Regular payments through UBI can ensure the sustenance of the workers engaged in the informal sector, at least till the economy normalises.
- The National Democratic Alliance government has already unfolded a limited version of the UBI in the form of the Pradhanmantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) which promises ₹6,000 per annum to farmers who own less than 2 hectares of land.
- Therefore, expanding it to other sectors is the question of the hour.

### Benefits of UBI

- **Social Justice:** UBI is firstly a test of an egalitarian society. Any society where all people do not earn income equally fails the test of justice. UBI propounds many of the basic values of a society that respects all individuals as equal. It promotes equality because it is anti-paternalistic, opens up the possibility of flexibility in labour markets. It promotes efficiency by increasing transparency in government transfers. Further information on Transparency in the Administration is available on the given link.
- **Poverty Reduction:** if the current financial system functions properly the UBI- Universal Basic Income may simply be the fastest way of poverty reduction. Know more about Poverty a social challenge on the given link.
- **Agency:** Our current welfare system, even when well-intentioned, inflicts an indignity upon the poor by assuming that they cannot take economic decisions relevant to their lives. An unconditional cash transfer treats them as agents, not subjects. UBI liberates citizens from paternalistic and clientele relationships with the state. By taking the individual and not the household as the unit of the beneficiary, UBI can also enhance agency, especially of women within households.
- **Employment:** UBI could open up new potentials for labour markets. It creates tractability by allowing individuals to have fractional or standardised engagements with the labour market without fear of losing benefits. They permit more non-exploitative negotiation since people will no longer be required to accept any working conditions, just so that they can survive.
- **Administrative Efficiency:** In India in particular, the case for UBI has been heightened because of the weakness of current welfare schemes that are riddled with misallocation, escapes and exclusion of the poor. When the trinity of JAM Jan-Dhan,-Aadhaar and Mobile is fully adopted the time would be apt for a mode of delivery that is administratively more efficient.
- **Institutional credit:** According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data from the 70th round, institutional credits account for less than 15% of the total borrowing by landless agricultural workers; The figure for marginal and small farmers is only 30%. These groups have to borrow from moneylenders and adhatiyas at exorbitant interest rates ranging from 24 to 60%. As a result, they do not stand to benefit much from the interest rate subsidy for the agriculture sector.

### Issues in implementation of UBI

- **Lack of the political will** because of the costs involved. The fiscal cost of a UBI pegged at Rs. 7,620, at 75% universality, was 4.9% of the GDP. The Economic Survey of India's (2016-17) model of UBI suggested providing Rs. 7,620 per annum to 75% of India's population. The income was based on Suresh Tendulkar's poverty line of 2011-12 inflation-indexed to 2016-17.



- A UBI on par with the numbers suggested by the Economic Survey could lead to targeted household incomes increasing by almost Rs. 40,000 per annum, since the average Indian household size is approximately five.
- Difficulty in reducing some of the existing subsidies to balance the resultant deficit.
- There is no guarantee that the given cash will be spent on productive activities, health & education, etc. It may be spent on tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and other luxury goods etc.
- Free cash to the people will increase the rate of inflation in the economy.
- Workers can refuse to work as a labourer or demand higher wages which can increase the cost of production of agricultural goods.
- Gender Disparity: Gender norms may regulate the sharing of UBI within the household. Men are likely to exercise control over UBI spending, which may not always be the case in other in-kind transfers.
- Political economy of universality – idea for self-exclusion: opposition may arise from the provision of transferring to the rich individual as it might seem to trump the idea of equity and state welfare of the poor.

### **Conclusion**

A qualified Universal basic income can be an answer to the limitations mentioned above. This will make people who are really vulnerable to sustain and progress. However UBI is not necessarily a silver bullet or a cure-all to end inequality. It is a potentially important tool that works best as a complement to broader poverty eradication programmes. It needs serious attention because we owe an obligation to humanity to end the appalling inequalities.

**3. What is fortified rice? How can it be helpful in addressing 'hidden hunger'? Discuss.****Approach**

Define what is hidden hunger in introduction and contextualise to Indian context. In next part mention what are positives of fortifying rice in India. Further write some apprehension related to fortification of food. In conclusion take a balanced view on the fortification and suggest a way ahead.

**Introduction**

When body lacks micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals like Iron, Vitamin B 12, Folic Acid in diet, even if a person is eating enough food, it can lead to devastating effects— from mental impairment, poor health, low productivity and a poor quality of life. This lack of vitamins and nutrients is termed as 'Hidden Hunger'. India has one of the worst body wasting and stunting status in children below 5 years as per Global nutrition survey. Therefore in this context food fortification especially of rice which is a staple diet of majority in India can have great impact on reducing hunger and malnutrition.

**Body**

What is fortified rice .

- Rice can be fortified by adding a micronutrient powder to the rice that adheres to the grains or spraying of the surface of ordinary rice grains with a vitamin and mineral mix to form a protective coating.
- Rice can also be extruded and shaped into partially precooked grain-like structures resembling rice grains, which can then be blended with natural polished rice.
- Rice kernels can be fortified with several micro-nutrients, such as iron, folic acid and other B-complex vitamins, vitamin A and zinc.
- These fortified kernels are then mixed with normal rice in a 1:100 ratio, and distributed for consumption.

Benefits of Fortified rice

- Fortified staple foods will contain natural or near natural levels of micro-nutrients, which may not necessarily be the case with supplements. This is necessary as according to Food and Agricultural organisation more than 50 percent of India are either not on balanced diet or the diet is unaffordable. Therefore fortifying will help in this regard.
- It provides nutrition without any change in characteristics of food or course of our meals. This will not make people apprehensive of changing their dietary habits, further no further extra cost has to be incurred on supply and purchases.
- If consumed on a regular and frequent basis, fortified foods will maintain body stores of nutrients more efficiently and more effectively than will intermittent

supplements. This will help India to achieve the targets of Zero hunger and also lead to India being able to effectively utilise its demographic dividend.

- The overall costs of fortification are extremely low; the price increase is approximately 1 to 2 per cent of the total food value. Therefore the overall project will not be affecting the fiscal deficit of the government.

Some issues with fortifications of rice

- Fortification and enrichment upsets nature's packaging. Our body does not absorb individual nutrients added to processed foods as efficiently compared to nutrients naturally occurring.
- Supplements added to foods are less bioavailable. Bioavailability refers to the proportion of a nutrient your body is able to absorb and use.
- Fortified foods and supplements can pose specific risks for people who are taking prescription medications, including decreased absorption of other micro-nutrients, treatment failure, and increased mortality risk.

However these risks have not found to be too profound as per the ministry of health and family welfare which had given a go ahead to introduce the fortified rice in the mid day meal scheme.

### **Conclusion**

Hidden hunger is a threat to individual development, burden on families and may affect the human capital of a nation. Therefore to tackle this menace there is a need to supply the essential nutrients in a faster and adequate quantity especially in India where the hunger indicators are worst. Further in long run the scientists should be incentivised to find solutions to the present limitations of food fortification and simultaneously an awareness campaign should be conducted to persuade people to adopt a balanced diet in the long run.

