

Issue/Analysis	Application/Value Add/ Think
<p>TOPIC: DROUGHTS</p>	<p>GS-I- Geography GS-III- Environment</p>
<p>Since 2000, there has been a 29 per cent increase in frequency and duration of droughts in the world. Drought is considered a slow onset disaster, thus giving enough time to prepare for it. But in recent decades, drought has emerged as one of the biggest drivers of human life loss and economic loss among weather-related disasters.</p>	<p>Introduction</p>
<p><b>Drought Consequences in the World</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Toll on Human Lives:</b> Droughts represent 15 per cent of natural disasters but took the largest human toll, approximately 650,000 deaths from 1970-2019. Drought has resulted in more than 10 million deaths in the past century.</li> <li>• <b>Human Displacement:</b> By 2030, or in the next eight years, drought will potentially displace an estimated 700 million people worldwide. In 2019-2020, drought impacted 1.4 billion people.</li> <li>• <b>Land Degradation:</b> UNCCD released its second Global Land Outlook that said “some 16 million square kilometres of land — the size of South America — will be degraded if current trends continue.” Also, to 40 per cent of all ice-free land is already degraded.</li> <li>• <b>Water Stress:</b> With drought, a grave water scarce era has set in. In 2022, according to the UNCCD assessment, more than 2.3 billion people face water stress.</li> </ul>	<p>Within the next few decades, 129 countries will experience an increase in drought exposure mainly due to climate change alone — 23 primarily due to population growth and 38 mostly due to the interaction between climate change and population growth,</p>
<p><b>Drought and India</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Vulnerability:</b> Geographically, India’s drought vulnerability compares with that of sub-Saharan Africa. India’s drought-prone area has increased by 57 per cent since 1997. Nearly two-thirds of the country suffered drought during 2020-2022. More than 100 districts are officially “chronic drought-affected” areas and 50 million people are affected by drought every year.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Loss:</b> The effect of severe droughts was estimated to have reduced India’s gross domestic product by 2-5 per cent over the 20 years from 1998-2017</li> </ul>	<p>India faced 22 major droughts between 1871 and 2002. The drought of 1987 was perhaps the worst drought of the last century, with an overall rainfall deficit of 19 per cent. It affected nearly 60 per cent of the crop area and more than 85 million people were severely affected.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land Degradation:</b> Some 97.85 million hectares — nearly 30 per cent of the country’s land — underwent land degradation during 2018-19, according to Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India.</li> <li>• <b>Adverse Impact on Agriculture:</b> Drought impacts India’s dominantly rainfed agriculture that accounts for 60 per cent of the sown area on average. Severe droughts in rainfed areas have reduced agricultural production by 20 to 40 per cent.</li> <li>• <b>Disproportionate Impact on Small Farmers:</b> Drought in rainfed areas hits small and marginal farmers hard, threatening their food and livelihood security. round 78 per cent of the farmers who committed suicide in the last one decade were small farmers and 76 per cent of them were dependent on rain-fed agriculture.</li> <li>• <b>Cause of Poverty:</b> Drought is a major factor in keeping people below the poverty line forever. One study found that almost 13 million people in the three states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha who live just above the poverty line, fall below it due to drought-induced income loss.</li> <li>• <b>Class Bias:</b> Drought impacts the poorest the hardest. It has been well documented that a poor farmer takes three to four years to recover from a drought, depending on the severity. So, it is a major reason for perpetuating poverty.</li> <li>• <b>Impacts Human Development:</b> The human development reports of Odisha, Chhattisgarh &amp; Rajasthan clearly indicate that drought-prone districts have lower human development indices as compared to the rest of the state.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Evolution of India’s Approach in handling drought</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the early 1970s, the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and the Desert Development Programme (DDP) were implemented to revive the ecology in hot and cold deserts.</li> <li>• The drought in 1987 forced to shift the focus of government to long-term measures such as water shed development.</li> <li>• It was the 2002 drought that finally prompted policy makers to account for the fact that drought was perpetuated by human-induced factors like neglect of water harvesting capacity.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Since then, rainwater harvesting – specifically revival of traditional systems – has been given priority in drought management, particularly under MGNREGA.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Way Ahead</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Considering the spread and impact of the problem, drought mitigation requires careful attention at policy level and effective action on ground.</li><li>• Innovative measures like MGNREGA could make an impact. But there should be better reach of such projects.</li><li>• It should be complemented with better monsoon forecast and promotion of other drought-proofing mechanisms such as saving on seeds and grains and easy loans to tide over the rough weather.</li></ul>	Conclusion

Issue/Analysis	Application/Value Add/ Think
<p><b>TOPIC: SECURITY OF GIG WORKERS</b></p>	<p>GS-III- Economy GS-II- Governance</p>
<p>The gig economy has gained prominence, especially in the aftermath of India's pandemic job crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to research by ASSOCHAM, India's gig economy is predicted to grow at a CAGR of 17% to \$455 billion by 2024.</li> <li>• Also, it is estimated that the Indian gig economy "has the potential to serve up to 90 million jobs in India's non-farm sectors (around 30%) and to add up to 1.25% to India's GDP through efficiency and productivity gains alone."</li> </ul>	<p>Introduction</p>
<p>A gig economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of gig employees in the workforce could include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and temporary or part-time hires.</li> <li>• According to a report by Boston Consulting Group, <b>India's gig workforce comprises 15 million workers</b> employed across industries such as software, shared services and professional services.</li> <li>• The number of gig workers has grown over the years, especially with consumer internet companies like Zomato, Swiggy, Uber, Ola, Urban Clap, etc</li> </ul>	<p>While the gig economy is prevalent among blue-collar jobs in India, the demand for gig workers in white-collar jobs such as project-specific consultants, salespeople, web designers, content writers and software developers is also emerging.</p>
<p><b>Merits of Gig Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility to Work from Anywhere</li> <li>• Ease of doing business as it brings in labour market flexibility</li> <li>• Improved Productivity of organisations</li> <li>• Improved Efficiency of the economy</li> <li>• Avenues for additional income for the poor</li> <li>• Ability to absorb growing labour demand</li> </ul>	<p>By 2025, India will have 350 million gig jobs providing great potential for job searchers to capitalise on.</p>
<p><b>Challenges of Gig Economy/ Problems faced by Gig Workers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overlooks gig workers' <b>appalling working conditions</b>, particularly at the lower end of the skill chain — pitiful wages, less social security, poor working environment, etc.</li> <li>• Lack of <b>trustworthy safety nets</b>.</li> <li>• Issue of <b>minimum wages</b> as there is currently little clarity on how the wages of gig workers are set.</li> </ul>	<p>Some of the complaints on Food Delivery Platforms like Swiggy &amp; Zomato are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low payouts</li> <li>• Opaque payout calculations and alleged cheating</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the new Social Security Code of 2020 gig workers are classified as unorganised sector workers, although the <b>security coverage is unclear</b>.</li> <li>• The code does not provide concrete plans, timelines or definitive financial architecture for any social security scheme.</li> <li>• India has protected workers through heavy-handed industrial regulation and labour laws, which suit the factory floor. They are irrelevant, insufficient, and ineffective in addressing disputes that originate on these new age platforms (swiggy, zomato etc) that are dependent on gig workers.</li> <li>• Growing <b>trust deficit</b> between the gig workers and the platforms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexplained differences in surge rates</li> <li>• Order clubbing and assignments to avoid incentive pay</li> <li>• Zone extensions to avoid return bonuses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Way Ahead</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating more well-paying, secure jobs, as well as higher wages and social safeguards for the gig workers, are essential to augment the industry.</li> <li>• The strengthening of diverse social security initiatives will provide job-seekers with improved job prospects and encourage them to pursue non-traditional jobs in the market.</li> <li>• Need to improve the trust between platforms and gig workers. Algorithm audits are one such technique, where an auditor has access to the algorithms and examine the results produced by them to expose any biases or shortcomings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>