Government's Own Gig Workers

What is the issue?

The Agnipath scheme has ignited a debate on the nature of jobs in the government.

How about the mode of inducting employees?

- **Nature of job**- Temporary jobs have comprised the vast majority of available government employment that may be classified as
  - Permanent
  - Contractual
  - Daily wagers
- **Induction of employees**- There are two main methods to induct an employee on contract in a government entity.
  - Directly on the payroll of the entity
  - Through a labour contractor or as part of any other contract entered into pursuant to a tender process
- Outsourcing has become the dominant mode of working in the government, from highly specialised tasks to the most routine ones.

Non-standard or gig work consists of income-earning activities outside of standard, long-term employer-employee relationships.

What are the issues with the contractual system?

1. **Issues**

- Non-payment of salaries for extended periods
- Fudging of statutory deductions for the worker's welfare such as provident fund, employees' state insurance, etc. by labour contractor
- Uneven distribution of work vis-à-vis permanent employees
- The shifting of responsibility of government to the contractor

2. **Case study**

- **Maharashtra**- Following the recent strike by Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation staffs, Aurangabad's City Bus Service, operated as a joint venture with the former, had to be suspended due to non-availability of drivers and conductors.
- Instead of outsourcing the service to a private agency, a decision was made to directly recruit the drivers and conductors from amongst ex-servicemen via fixed term contracts to be renewed periodically.

- **TULIP-** The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs' The Urban Learning Internship Program (TULIP), enables city authorities to directly engage a young workforce for a fixed term.



What is the need of the hour?

- Even though a permanent government job remains highly coveted, it is important to also recognise that not everyone may aspire to 'permanence' due to various reasons.
- Fixed term contracs will have to assimilate the principles of affirmative action, in line with the vision of social justice to avoid becoming a mechanism that will skip provisions for reservation.

References

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