



IASBABA'S
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PREFACE

With the present shift in examination pattern of UPSC Civil Services Examination, 'General Studies – II and General Studies III' can safely be replaced with 'Current Affairs'. Moreover, following the recent trend of UPSC, almost all the questions are issue-based rather than news-based. Therefore, the right approach to preparation is to prepare issues, rather than just reading news.

Taking this into account, our website www.iasbaba.com will cover current affairs focusing more on 'issues' on a daily basis. This will help you pick up relevant news items of the day from various national dailies such as The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, LiveMint, Business Line and other important Online sources. Over time, some of these news items will become important issues.

UPSC has the knack of picking such issues and asking general opinion based questions. Answering such questions will require general awareness and an overall understanding of the issue. Therefore, we intend to create the right understanding among aspirants – 'How to cover these issues?'

This is the **20th edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **January 2017**.

Value add's from IASbaba- Must Read and Connecting the dots.

'**Must Read**' section, will give you important links to be read from exam perspective. This will make sure that, you don't miss out on any important news/editorials from various newspapers on daily basis.

Under each news article, '**Connecting the dots**' facilitates your thinking to connect and ponder over various aspects of an issue. Basically, it helps you in understanding an issue from multi-dimensional view-point. You will understand its importance while giving Mains or Interview.

Must Read Articles: We have not included them in the magazine. Those following DNA on daily basis may follow it- <http://iasbaba.com/babas-daily-news-analysis/>

"Your Only Limit is You"

All the Best ☺

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NATIONAL

TOPIC:

General Studies 1

- *Social empowerment, communalism*
- *Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India*

General Studies 2

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections*

Reservation- Eligibility and non-eligibility

In news: The country has suddenly witnessed spike in agitations coming across the dominant sections, more bluntly- the dominant castes of the society, to get reservations. This is validated from the agitations carried out by Patidars in Gujarat, the Marathas in Maharashtra and the Jats in Haryana and neighbouring states.

Constitution is clear

The constitution provides reservation for three social classes only:

1. Scheduled Caste
 - They have been the victims of 'untouchability' under the caste system
 - This has led to their all-round deprivation, discrimination and disadvantage
 2. Scheduled Tribe
 - They are the sufferers of isolation under vulnerable 'tribal' conditions which have made them deprived and brought them at disadvantageous position all through their life
 3. Socially and Educationally Backward Classes
 - These are the victims of 'social backwardness'.
 - They belong to a low position in the traditional caste hierarchy and linkages with 'lowly' traditional occupations.
- These sections of society have faced discrimination and have been at a disadvantage due to the **traditional social structure of the caste system** with 'untouchability'.
 - Thus, the constitution provides for their reservation as a part of comprehensive social justice measures to secure equality for them.
 - But, the constitution does not provide for or permit reservation for the poor belonging to the **Socially Advanced Castes (SACs)** — or the forged 'economically backward classes'.

- These classes are not recognised by the constitution because their poverty is not the outcome of the traditionally unjust social system.

Understanding Reservation

- The reservation was adopted in the presidencies and princely states of the peninsula well before Independence.
- Reservation is not a programme for the removal or amelioration of poverty and unemployment but to remove the imbalance in governance and administration where there is monopoly of a few castes and the exclusion of castes that account for the vast majority of the population.
- With constitution's affirmation, the reservation became an integral part of the basic structure of measures required for the elimination of inherited inequality, based on caste with 'untouchability' and for social equality.
- As a result, the SACs are now seeing the once looked down upon castes coming up through reservation and progressing in admission to educational institutions and employment as well as occupying top positions such as presidents and chairpersons of panchayats and municipalities, as a threat to their dominance.
- Thus, the dominant castes are demanding an inclusion in the list of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEdBCs) and thereby avail provision of reservation on that basis.

The SACs

- The presently agitating castes are dominant castes whose members are major landowners in their states. A widely known fact is that some of these castes have leveraged their advantageous position in agriculture to diversify and enter business, trade and industry in addition to state services.
- The national and state backward class commissions have found these communities socially and educationally not backward and also adequately represented in services and that is why their past requests for inclusion in SEdBC lists have been rejected by governments.
- Hence, they are resorting to an exercise of coercive power on governance as they do not meet objective criteria, especially the basic criterion of social backwardness.
- However, this coercion has hidden motive too- if the government cant give them reservation, reservation should be abolished totally- and thereby push back the further progress of SCs, STs and SedBCs.
- Another reason mentioned by SACs is that land fragmentation and economic problems are being faced by them and hence they should be included in reservation list. But it has to be clearly etched in mind that such economic exigencies by themselves cannot be the criterion for recognising a caste as socially backward.

Raising the ground

- It is true that there are difficulties in agriculture and cyclical problems in industry and the solution can be found through appropriate policies.
- The genuinely poor among the SACs deserve sympathy and help through an appropriate dispensation and not inclusion in reservation list.
- Similarly, there can be measures like scholarships and education loans, so that no youth has to drop out at any stage due to financial incapacity. This will prevent any burden on the youth and family as well as no requirement of being added to 'reservation list'.
- It has been observed previously that ruling parties have succumbed to force of such dominant parties and also opposition parties have supported them which makes the battle lines being drawn between ruling and opposition parties and nation and constitution.
- Such dishonest and short-sighted gimmicks are especially used during elections which bring parties into disrepute and erode confidence in democratic system while creating social disharmony also.

Conclusion

It is well known that jobs have dried up despite the comparative growing Indian economy around the world. However, quota is not a solution to gain employment. There were 19.5 million jobs in the public sector in 1992-1993 when India's population was 839 million. While the country's population is now 1.3 billion, the number of jobs in the public sector has shrunk to 17.6 million. Thus, quota is no means to plug job loopholes.

The politicians have tried to bypass the court orders by creating quotas for economically backward classes as seen in *Rajasthan Economically Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointments and Posts in Services under the State) Bill 2015*. Gujarat and Maharashtra tried to introduce quotas for economically weaker sections but these governments were overruled by the courts.

The constitution has designed positive discrimination in favour of socially backward class and not for the poor dominant castes. That is the reason why courts have systematically struck down the quotas introduced by governments for such castes. The courts have also struck down additional quotas because they push up the proportion of reservation above the 50% limit set by SC.

Hence, it is the duty of political class to make it clear that SACs cannot be included in the list of Socially Backward Classes — the genuinely poor among them will be given appropriate relief and help, but not reservation.

Connecting the dots:

- The quota system has been a boon or bane? Elucidate.
- Quota system has divided society into multiple unintended fragments. Do you agree? Explain why.

TOPIC: General Studies 1

- *Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.*

General Studies 2

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

Revival of Focus on Urbanisation in India**Introduction and Significance of Urban Areas**

Urban areas are often referred to as engines of inclusive economic growth. Currently, almost 30% of the population in India is living in urban areas. Further, it is expected that India will add 300 million new urban residents by 2050 and hence needs to build climate-friendly and resilient cities to address the challenge of accommodating the needs of the growing population. As per the first 'World Cities Report 2016- Urbanisation and Development: Emerging Futures' report by UN Habitat, urban areas in India are already contributing more than 60 per cent of the GDP. Hence, India needs to ensure continued focus on terms of policy on addressing the needs of rising urbanisation.

Challenges to Urbanisation

Even though there has been universal acceptance and acknowledgment on the importance of urbanisation for economic growth, still India has lagged behind in terms of urbanisation due to the following reasons:

- Indecisiveness on the matters related to urbanisation in the post independence years.
- Inadequate relevance given to urbanisation for achieving our socio-economic goals and development.
- A weak policy approach towards urbanisation has also led to faulty implementation and ignorance.
- Centralised approach in policies and initiatives related to urbanisation did not give states or cities much autonomy and choice.
- Delayed approval of projects caused implementation delays.

Such an approach led to failure of one of the first dedicated policy towards urbanisation - Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). JNNURM was launched in 2005 but by the end of its existence in 2014, only 710 projects out of the 1630 sanctioned under JNNURM could be completed.

Change in Approach

The government has now come up with many policies focussed on addressing challenges of rising urbanisation. For the effective functioning of these policies and programmes, the government is bringing in following changes in its style of working:

- Objectivity and transparency in selection of cities and allocation of central resources under new urban missions. This is being done on the basis of urban population and the number of statutory urban local bodies in each State.
- Bottom up planning is being promoted to encourage more sense of involvement in and ownership of new schemes by city and State governments.
- Timely project and investment approvals are being accorded to ensure giving the states and cities sufficient time for their implementation.
- Citizen participation in urban planning and project prioritisation are now made mandatory.
- Cities are also being empowered by making them a part of the development. They are being given a higher say in the entire process.
- Under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and Smart Cities Mission, there shall be a comprehensive assessment of infrastructure deficit before drawing up city-level action plans.
- States will not be allocated funds and projects in an arbitrary manner or on the basis of poor quality reports and project analysis.
- Online integrated single-window clearance for construction permits is being put in place to improve ease of doing business.
- Public-private partnerships are being encouraged in cities to address the financing needs.

Addressing Financing Problems

Earlier, there was a major problem where project approvals were given in the last two quarters of the financial year. This led to a hurried and unorganised manner of implementation. This not only led to delay in implementation of projects but also let to cities and states receiving inadequate funds.

Now the government is making efforts to anticipate fund entitlements of each State and city-wise infrastructure deficits in advance. The Ministry of Urban Development has also started approving investments for the next three financial years under AMRUT during this year. Such steps enable city and State governments to realise mission targets by the stipulated time through advance planning.

In a latest shift of methodology, cities are now vying for credit rating to attract investment which proves useful for urbanisation. Pune and Ahmedabad are ready to issue municipal bonds to raise funds. Post approval, release of funds is also linked to progress of mandated governance reforms under the urban development missions.

Impact

As a result of the above reform measures undertaken by the government in the area of policy related to urbanisation a lot of positive changes have taken place.

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), construction of about 15 lakh affordable houses is being financed as against only about 12.50 lakh during 10 years of UPA rule. Under AMRUT, 86 per cent of mission investments stand approved.
- Over 500 cities and towns have already become open defecation-free and Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Sikkim have declared all cities and towns as open defecation-free.
- Financial allocations are being made in a timely manner. Government has committed Rs.50,000 crore under AMRUT, Rs.48,000 crore for smart cities. Funds are also being allocated to individual households under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).
- Higher allocation for cities and more empowerment to states to spend more is also being experienced.

Connecting the dots

- Discuss why India has been lagging behind in tackling the preparing for urbanisation. Suggest what changes in governance and policy implementation will help India in preparing for Urbanisation?

TOPIC: General Studies 2

- **Salient features of the Representation of People's Act**

Democracy- for an individual or public sphere?

Election is termed as a 'secular' exercise and thus there should be no involvement of religion. Secular in the sense that the relationship of man with God is an individual and personal choice and thus, the state has to keep itself within limits.

In a landmark judgement, a 4:3 divided seven judge constitution bench of Supreme Court held that an appeal for votes during elections on the basis of religion, caste, race, community or language, **even that of the electorate**, will amount to a 'corrupt practice' and call for disqualification of the candidate.

Background:

- *Section 123 (3) of RPA Act: Corrupt Electoral Practice- "The appeal by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent to vote or refrain from voting for any person on the ground of **his** religion, race, caste, community or language..."*
- The question referred to the Constitution Bench was whether the word '**his**' used in Section 123 (3) of the Representation of the People Act only meant **a bar on appeals made in the name of the candidate or his rival or his agent.**
- **For example:** "I am a Hindu, vote for me", or "My opponent is a Hindu, don't vote for her". This was corrupt practice.

- Or if the **word ‘his’ also extend** to soliciting votes on the basis of the religion, caste, community, race, language of the **electorate as a whole (the voter too)**.
- **For example:** “You speak Tamil, vote for me/party”. This will be now a corrupt practice.

Making democracy stronger- A majority view

- The latter means a **blanket ban** on any appeal, reference, campaign, discussion, dialogue or debate on the basis of religion, race, caste, community or language, even if such a debate was on the deprivations suffered by the voters due to these considerations.
- The majority view held that an election that was fought and decided on these issues was a distortion of democracy. Two reasons
 1. **Divisive tactics:** For a democracy to survive, there must be agreements on certain basic essentials which unite the citizens together. Religion, language, caste, etc were precisely the kind of divisive markers of identity that threatened this fragile consensus
 2. **Irrational choice:** Democracy depends on voter exercising their franchise based on rational thought and action. If appeals are made on religion, caste, language basis, it might result into different and may be, an irrational choice.
- Therefore, to restrict Section 123(3)’s prohibition only to electoral candidates would be contrary to public interest.
- The CJJ said that appealing on the basis of religion would amount to “mixing religion with State power” which is against the fundamental value of Constitution of India- Secularism.
- The electorate has to participate as a **rational individual**, deliberating about the public interest, not to be affected by the baggage of religion, caste, language or community.
- Thus, the word “his” in Section 123(3) was to be understood broadly, referring to both the speaker as well as the audience. In effect, it prohibited appeals to the prohibited “grounds” (religion, caste etc) during the electoral process.

The dissent judgement

- This rule was passed by a majority 4:3. The minority favoured **limiting the ambit of the sub-section** to cover only candidates who sought votes on such grounds, or the rivals they wanted the voters not to back on similar grounds.
- Here, the arguments put forward were that there were **historic discriminations and deprivations suffered by the masses** on the ground of religion, caste and language.
- Religion, caste and language are as much a symbol of **social discrimination imposed** on large segments of our society. They are **central theme of the Constitution** to produce a just social order. Thus, they cannot be barred from being discussed in elections.
- Electoral politics in a democratic polity is about social mobilisation and access to governance is a means of addressing social disparities.
- Social mobilisation is a powerful instrument of bringing marginalised groups into the mainstream where the candidate can speak about the legitimate concerns of citizens

that the injustices faced by them on the basis of traits having an origin in religion, race, caste, community or language can be remedied.

- There is no such thing as an 'individual' as he always is situated in their 'social context'. These have been characterised in India by religion, language, caste and community.
- These are, and have been, the sites of inclusion and exclusion, privilege and oppression, domination and resistance, power, pleasure, discrimination, and suffering.
- Today, there is a visible change in society where people who have been discriminated against for centuries have acquired a certain social salience. It is this democratic upbringing that allowed B.R. Ambedkar to form the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, a political party exclusively devoted to Dalit emancipation.
- This was because the oppressed class were allowed to organise their issues around their social status and gain political power.
- For this reason, the dissent held that Section 123(3) had to be construed narrowly.

Too much into 'his' dispute?

- This dispute is based on a single pronoun 'his' which was introduced in the 1961 amendment.
- The majority opinion favours a 'purposive interpretation', holding that it covered the candidates as well as the voter. The purpose of the amendment was to widen the scope of the particular corrupt practice.
- But, there is a justifiable worry that **a wider interpretation may lead to eliminating from the poll discourse political issues that are based on religion, caste or language.**
- It has to be understood that all such legal issues have an attached social context.

IASbaba's views

The overall message is clear- secularism is basic feature of Constitution and has been interpreted in the light of Parliament's intention to prohibit any religious or sectarian appeal for votes. But Indian secularism has to be understood differently where it does not mandate complete exclusion of religion from the public sphere. Identities based upon religion, caste, and language should not be always treated as an evil faction but rather as centre point as a site of emancipation around which citizens organise themselves and seek liberation through the attainment of political power.

It will no doubt be now dependent upon the wisdom of the judges dealing with election cases to draw the line between what is permissible and what is not, and look at the context in which some statements are made before deciding whether they constitute a corrupt practice.

Connecting the dots:

- A blanket ban on appealing people on basis on religion, caste etc. for political power is an appropriate solution to imbibe the constitutional values in electorates. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

- *A rational individual or a connective community- What is important for the Indian democracy? In light of recent SC judgement on declaring appeals based on certain grounds as 'corrupt practice', critically analyse the aforementioned statement.*

TOPIC: General Studies 2

- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*
- *Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections*

General Studies 4

- *Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; Information sharing and transparency in government.*

Analysis of Government Policies

Introduction

India's growth story in the recent past has been marked by a series of transformative initiatives that have enhanced the country's image internationally and also worked towards improving the living standards of all sections of the people. Inclusive growth and welfare have been two essential pillars in India's growth story. India's recent performance in various policy areas represents a bright future for the country.

Social Inclusion and Welfare

- Welfare of the poor, farmers, women, workers, small traders and other vulnerable sections has been on the top of the priority list of government. Ever since the 11th Five Year Plan, India has laid continuous emphasis on inclusive growth.
- The two major problems of black money and corruption have been the biggest hurdles to India's growth. Along with improving the living standards of vulnerable sections, the government has worked continuously on tackling black money and corruption.
- Initiatives tackling the menace of black money include constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to unearth black money stashed abroad, Voluntary Disclosure Scheme and the historic demonetisation of currency.
- The latest relief measures announced by the government on the eve of new year for PM to the poor, middle classes, farmers, women and senior citizens shows how the government has been making efforts towards transparent administration.

International Relations

In the past few years, the present government has made efforts to ensure that India's visibility on the global stage is very high. It is also taking steps to ensure that its voice is heard on international platforms.

- As soon as Prime Minister Modi came to power, he took a major strategic step by inviting all the neighbouring country leaders for the swearing in ceremony. Although, India has had its share of troubles with respect to the SAARC but India has been constantly emphasising on regional co-operation.
- An important development of engagement with world leaders and India's role as a responsible nuclear state has been the inking of agreements with Canada, Australia and Kazakhstan for the supply of uranium to meet India's nuclear energy needs.
- The way India negotiated its way through the issue of Peace Clause under the WTO negotiations has also been exemplary.
- India has had improved relations with the USA, Japan, Germany and many more nations.

Economic Progress

The Government of India has taken steps in areas related to economics to ensure that India is able to experience sustainable growth and macroeconomic development.

- India has worked towards widening the social security net by increasing coverage of deprived sections through the creation of Jan Dhan accounts, MUDRA bank and insurance schemes.
- Opening up more avenues for investment through the FDI reforms will give a huge push to various important sectors of the economy.
- Controlling inflation, increasing spending on infrastructure and dismantling red tape have been among the measures that have helped the GDP register more than seven per cent growth.
- Even after demonetisation, in the long run, the GDP is expected to improve as the informal economy vastly reduces and the formal economy expands.
- The government has also worked hard towards initiating reforms for an improvement in India's ranking in ease of doing business index. For this purpose, India has improved in terms of transparency and accountability. Example: Transparency relating to the auctioning of spectrum and coal blocks.

Infrastructure and Resource Development

- Make In India, Skill India, Digital India and Clean India are among the innovative campaigns that are shaping India's growth story through adequate focus on human resource development.
- Five major industrial corridors are being developed across the country to increase the contribution of the manufacturing sector to 25 per cent of GDP from the existing 16 per cent.
- Currently only 2% of India's workforce has formal training. The Skill India scheme aims to reap our demographic advantage with youth comprising 65 per cent of the country's

population. To give necessary focus to this area, for the first time since Independence, a separate ministry for skill development has been created.

Agriculture and Farm Welfare

- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been introduced to improve upon the lacunae in the earlier insurance schemes for the agriculture sector and provide maximum safety net to the farmers.
- 1.3 million hectares have been brought under micro-irrigation through the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana.
- The e-National Agriculture Market aims to empower the farmer. With digital transactions getting a huge fillip, farmers stand to benefit immensely as more mandis get linked to e-NAM and ensures that farmers get adequate market access for their crops

Conclusion

There is no doubt that all these areas have had their respective challenges and hurdles as well but the positive intent behind the continuous reforms is what can be really instrumental in shaping India's growth story. Persistent efforts towards reforms will lead to ensure that in India farmers, traders, women and youth are prosperous, empowered and gainfully employed. These measures will also ensure that maximum population has access to the basic amenities of electricity, water and a toilet.

Connecting the dots

- Critically analyse how India has constantly focussed on social welfare and inclusive growth through various reform initiatives in the recent past.

TOPIC: General Studies 2

- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Education in 2017- What should be the focus?

Education is more than a way of being, it is an art of becoming. Education is not only about a process of nurturing the human soul, as the ancient Greeks understood it through the notion of *paideia* which meant the acquisition and transmission of excellence. But education is also what philosopher Bertrand Russell defines as- "a certain outlook on life and the world."

Background:

India holds an important place in the global education industry. India has more than 1.4 million schools with over 227 million students enrolled and more than 36,000 higher education institutes. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. Higher education system in India has undergone rapid expansion. Currently, India's higher education system is the largest in the world enrolling over 70 million students.

However, there is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system.

Education is not only about books as followed by the Indian education system. The learning has to come from surroundings and then tailor made into value added education. The union budget 2016-17 termed education as one of the nine pillars of the budget. But there are mammoth challenges faced by Indian education system- enrolment, excellence and employability. Thus, the focus of education should be to address these major challenges.

1. **Public education** has no substitute. Hence, its quality and quantity should be reaffirmed explicitly through actions. This involves subsequent increase in budget allocation and striving to reach 6% of GDP in coming years. Thus, there is need for more **public investment**. Regional and rural-urban disparities must be addressed too while allocating education budgets.

2. **Educators** have a special responsibility in education —social, political, human and epistemic. Teaching is at the heart of education system but India has one of the weakest teacher education programme (B.Ed) in world which deprives children of a bright future which comes from creative present. India has around 8.8 million teachers but this existing teacher base requires massive investment in effective capacity development. Along with it, the teachers have to be trained with new teaching and learning pedagogies adapted from best practices across the world. The 'rote learning' method has to go and instead bring in environment which allows children to learn at their own pace.

Already, the concepts of flipped classrooms (pedagogical model where short video lectures are viewed by students before they attend the class. The in-class time is devoted to discussing it or other related activities) and MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) have already started taking off, especially in some of the leading Indian institutions.

The improved quality of teachers should be backed by the increased number of teachers in schools.

3. **Vocational education** has to be made a par of basic education upto standard XII along with academics. Education needs to realign itself with changing times and therefore has to develop fundamental capacities—e.g. independent thinking, problem-solving—so that people can adapt instead of providing narrow skills for jobs.

Skill Development has been focus of the present government which should rationalise which skills it aims imparts.

4. On an average, private schools do not perform better than public schools. But still there is a prolific rise in private schooling in the past decade and no significant improvement has been visible. Thus, it has to be understood that **privatisation of education** is no solution to increase the quality and quantity of educated children.
However, it does not mean that private schools should not be encouraged. They can bring in new ideas and perspectives which can be also considered by others.
But, commercialisation of education has to stop as education is no commodity.
5. Just by **ranking lists or assessments**, the quality of education won't improve. "Testing"-based "accountability" of educators is a disaster, it damages the education system at its core. Examinations must be improved to assess real and deep capacities rather than memorization and procedural skills.
6. **Technology** is not the panacea to solve the problem of poor learning standards. They help just as the books do. That is why, any investment in technology should be assessed properly before shelling out millions on setting up infrastructure.
The learning capability of the children have to be improved with multiple tools.
7. Higher education has a bright future in idea. The government is taking various steps to increase the outreach of higher education after primary education. Several MoUs have been signed between India and Australia in the fields of higher education and research, including technical and professional education, schools, vocational education and training.
Also, GIAN brings talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs, internationally to encourage their engagement with the institutes of Higher Education in India so as to augment the country's existing academic resources, accelerate the pace of quality reform, and elevate India's scientific and technological capacity to global excellence.
8. Education and learning are deeply determined by the **socio-economic conditions** of the child. The best teachers cannot compensate for deprivation and poverty at home. Hence, there should be proper arrangements made in school for children belonging to all class and castes of society.
Also, the schools should be secular and non-discriminative institutions where the ideals of constitution are respected and followed.
9. There is a need for dramatic improvement in our early childhood-care system and also in education for **children with disabilities**. The school infrastructure, including specially trained teachers is the basic impediment while imparting education to children with disabilities. The government needs to undertake various actions to make education an 'inclusive activity'.
10. Mother tongue is the most effective medium of education in early grades. However, given the reality of the social capital of **English**, all children must have the opportunity to learn the language.
11. On **regulatory front**, HRD ministry is likely to move towards giving greater autonomy to government backed institutions -- like the Indian Institute of Managements (IIMs) -- in deciding their future. This is more likely to be in the fashion of allowing them the

freedom to experiment with technology and with the new ways of reaching out to people.

12. **Economic aims** of India should be fulfilled by education by providing individuals become economically independent. It is not without any reason that India is charted out to be global leader in having the youngest population which can become a path breaker in achieving sustainable economic success. However, these economic aims should usher in equality and narrow down disparities.

Conclusion

Education is not an economic service. It is a social-human and moral endeavour; it's about people and their aspirations for the good life.

Hence, education should lead to development of good human beings and a good society based on principle of Constitution of India, thereby creating a foundational value of India's democracy.

Connecting the dots:

- Why is education vital for India to grow as a developed society? Give reasons.
- Education sector is facing multiple challenges in 21st century. Critically examine the reasons and enumerate ways to bring solution to them.

Women Safety- Making cities safe

In news: the New Year eve 'mass molestation' incident in Bengaluru has brought back the focus once again on women's safety as well as public consciousness. Though no complaint had been filed initially, the police have taken up investigation based on the reports of women being assaulted physically. Following the horrific incident, when a state minister blames such an incident on 'western culture', it is unfortunate how state and society failed to ensure the safety of women.

The rhetoric follows

- Attitude of state and society towards such incidents has made the women reluctant to register offences as if she does so, she will invite an accusatory glare of 'wearing particular kind of clothes', 'late night outings', 'being with boys' and 'why alone in a lonely street'.
- Post such incidences, the rhetoric of blame-the-victim and deny-it-happened continues for a while.
- Along with it, there announcements of buying new CCTVs and other quick fixes.
- Hence, it has been now observed that the notion of safety comes across as that one of security and protection and not of right!

Role of stakeholders

- Political will is extremely important to bring about long-term and systemic change that addresses the actual causes of the problem as there is no easy and rapid solution towards the road of gender equality.
- The rights of women against any kind of violence, whether in public or private sector, require participation from its stakeholders with a multi-pronged strategy.
- Whether it is police or law enforcement agencies who have to look after their outdoor safety as a whole or it is urban and transport planners who have to engage with women on equal footing so as to know their problems while travelling or education systems and the media, the participation of all is needed to foster an ethos of equality and to challenge patriarchal and anti-women ideologies.

Police

- It is one of the critical stakeholders in building more robust policing and legal systems for women's safety.
- From the moment an incident of violence takes place, there should be quick, efficient and non-judgemental responses. Non-required questions, especially personal questions like what she was wearing should not be included.
- The case should be dealt swiftly and effectively by the legal system so that perpetrators of violence fear the repercussions of their actions. If need be, the police
- However, the facts present an adverse case. The cases of violence against women, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, has gone up but the convictions are still abysmally low. Only one of 100 cases registered under Section 354 led to convictions in 2015.
- The Centre has a Nirbhaya project, the recommendations of Justice Usha Mehra Commission and states like Kerala had a similar policy much before the Delhi incident. But they have been just on paper. Had they been properly implemented, many of the offences against women would not have happened.

Urban planners

- There is a need of gender-sensitive urban planning, service delivery and governance as setting up police and legal system is not enough.
- Such kind of urban planning will ensure that our cities and towns promote accessibility, safety and inclusion.
- It is unfortunate that today more cities are losing public spaces. Safety audits done across cities have revealed that better lighting and CCTVs all across the cities can make the space safer.
- Many cities around the world have been making changes to make cities more inclusive. For example,
 - In Seoul, public spaces have been revitalized by making them pedestrian areas with shops and establishments that make the street-front active.

- In Rosario, Argentina, wall art has been used to engage young men in making public spaces more usable
- In Papua New Guinea, women have used safety audits to make markets more women-friendly.
- Thus, the cities have to be planned in such a way that streets are active, lively and usable by a wide variety of people, including women, children and the disabled.

Public Transport

- Good and safe public transport is central to women's right to mobility.
- Studies from across Indian cities have shown that women have reported facing a great deal of sexual harassment while using and waiting for public transport.
- Women only railway coaches or buses may be a partial solution but all forms of public transport must provide for instant redress and support through helplines and other measures for women and girls to use at any time of the day (or night).

Women have as much right to the city as anyone else. They have the right to access public spaces at any time and it is the duty of the state to ensure they are not violated.

The society's culture

- Irrespective of whatever state or city women live in, lack of respect for them is ingrained in its culture.
- More than a law and order issues, it is a mindset problem. A majority of Indian men grow up in an environment where domestic violence and gender discrimination is a common factor and where women are treated as second-class citizens.
- Men are brought up to believe that they are the most important entity at home and that the women "belong" to them so they can have their way around them irrespective of the consequences.
- Today, parents want their girls to be safe rather than defiant poster girls for gender parity. It reflects the ground reality that parents are wary of danger lurking around whenever their girl child is out. And feminists cannot blame them for protecting the child instead of taking a baton of 'changing the society.'
- Mindset has to be changed from the core. Sexism should be removed from textbooks, building public opinion against movies portraying stalking of women as sureshot way to get her, marathons and events highlighting women's rights to access and dignity, 'no means no' or a simple exercise of women meetings in parks/restaurants/ roads/public spaces.

IASbaba's views

The state as well as society — are reactionary in nature. But that doesn't help as the damage done to a women's integrity can never be restored by its laws and justice.

The request of I&B ministry to all private FM radio firms to broadcast jingles that promote positive portrayal of women show the lack of long term strategy with the government.

Though it is a step in positive direction, such kind of quick fixes are not sustainable. Consultations with stakeholders and seeing through the implementation is effective way of expected change.

Denying women safe and equal access to public spaces violates her most basic constitutional rights of equality and dignity. This denial also has social and economic implications where the women prefer to stay indoors, negatively effecting the female labour force participation.

Thus, the society and the State need to change its attitude and be more respectful towards women who drive their economy and the society forward- literally.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the challenges faced by women in society with respect to their right to freedom and right to access. Examine.
- More than the state, the attitude of the society needs to change to look at women in more respectful way. Do you agree? Support your answer with examples.

Restructuring India's Urban Strategy

Introduction

The present government in India has urbanisation and development of cities on top of its agenda. The same is visible from the policies focussing on the same such as Smart Cities Mission, mass rapid transit systems such as the metro services being developed and waste management etc.

However, the policy makers also need to understand that urban areas are not all about concrete structures but more about the kind of lifestyle that is given to the people and the objective should be to make the lives of people better. The culture of cities should emerge out of local desires and needs of the local population. Commercial, cultural and professional attributes should define the nature of the development of cities.

Challenges for Urbanisation in India

In contemporary times, India is faced with a few challenges that it needs to overcome for achieving sustainable urbanisation. These challenges are:

- In the recent past, even though funds have been available, cities have been unable to expand road networks and metro lines as per growing demand.
- Uncontrolled growth of population has made plans for public facilities ineffective. For example: Delhi Metro has increased the number of coaches, the frequency of trains, the size of stations and the length of platforms but still it struggles to accommodate the rising population.
- Increased vehicular pressure has led to congestion on roads and clogged networks.

- Migration is on a continuous rise with a Mumbai witnessing an influx of 4,000 families per week.
- Real estate businesses are building high-end luxury homes but cities still lack basic infrastructure for the public.
- A majority share of some cities are not recognised or do not qualify for being eligible to be a part of the planning process.
- Populist measure and bureaucratic tendencies are another hurdle in the way to urbanisation as per citizen needs.

Re-thinking for India

No doubt Indian government is aptly focussing on cities and urban infrastructure in the light of increasing pressure and migration still certain things need to be kept in mind while we rethink our strategy with respect to the cities.

- Indian cities are highly heterogeneous so the conventional approaches to their mega size may not work as in case of world cities such as Rome and Shanghai.
- Small towns such as Meerut which are part rural, part cantonment and are also essential to maintaining commercial links to surrounding villages are the cities which need most of the attention from government policies.
- India needs to devise a development strategy for smaller towns. This will be a shift from the conventional approach.
- Policies for these towns must take into account new forms of public housing, regulate bye-laws that restrict commuting and delineate public space over private commerce.
- So as the focus on smaller towns grows, simultaneously larger towns need to be relieved of the burden of new citizens.
- Instead of long distance connectivity steps should be taken to include pedestrianisation, conversion to mixed-use streets, reduction of commercial activity and an eradication of gated neighbourhoods.
- Residential areas should be promoted where all people live together and encourage a sense of community and inclusion. This will also help in eroding differences of ethnicity, profession, caste, social and economic position.
- Behavioural and attitudinal changes have to be brought about amongst the citizens for all the above non conventional methods to be successful. The Western model of urbanisation is not the best one that India should be following.

Way Forward

The new cities are going to witness a new kind of population group which will not be restricted to one place. The mobility of the people will be very high. Bureaucracy will have an enabling role to play in terms of migration but will not be defining the strategies for urbanisation.

In this contemporary set up, traditional structures of justice and legislature not hold prime importance and people with private needs will take up an important role in the society.

India will definitely need to work towards smart cities and include digitisation as a part of urban policies like Stockholm and Berlin but it will not be the only and the most comprehensive solution for India. Considering the high number of migratory citizens and pedestrians, India should follow cities such as Lagos or Cairo rather than European or Chinese cities.

Connecting the dots

- India needs to rethink on its strategy towards urbanisation. Give reasons for the need to restructure the strategy and suggest a non conventional strategy best suited for India based on international examples.

RBI, Ministry of Finance and Autonomy

In news: the demonetisation decision has once again floated the much debated topic of diminishing autonomy of the central bank and overpowering by the government

Background

- The decision of scrapping 86% of the currency in circulation was mostly welcomed due to its advertisement as 'a move to remove black money and counterfeit notes from the economy.'
- However, its implementation has been largely criticised, the poor and the lower class of the society found themselves devoid of cash, affecting the agriculture and MSMEs the most, lack of financial inclusion through bank linkages etc.
- Two months after such a policy decision, the autonomy of the central bank of India — the Reserve Bank of India — was touted to be compromised as it supported the government's decision.

The loss of autonomy?

- The initial suggestion to demonetize Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 500 currency notes came from the government. It then advised RBI to take the call on demonetization and the RBI board signed off on it before the public announcement. Thereafter, RBI came under lot of flak by accepting government's decision of demonetisation.
- Its role in the decision making process and its preparedness came under question with the central bank putting out at least 60 notifications in the first 50 days, some often reversing earlier decisions.

- Later, there was protest from the RBI Union on operational "mismanagement" in the exercise and Government impinging its autonomy by appointing an official for currency coordination. They mentioned RBI Act 1934 which empowers RBI to regulate the issue of bank notes and hence needs no interference from the government.
- This made the Ministry of finance release a statement saying "*the government fully respects the independence and autonomy of the Reserve Bank of India*". The employees unions represent the masses and hence they were assured that RBI is independent.

Within limits

- Section 26(2) of the RBI Act says that on recommendation of the RBI's central board, the government may, by notification in the Gazette of India, declare that with effect from a date specified in the notification, any series of bank notes of any denomination shall cease to be legal tender.
- Hence, when RBI Board decided for withdrawal of Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 500 notes from the system, there was nothing illegal.
- Section 7 of the RBI Act empowers the government to *give directions* to the central bank governor in *matters of public interest*, which is what the government did with demonetisation.
- The only areas where government should be prevented from interfering are issuing a licence, investigation and setting policy rates.

Decision in public interest

- The important question which arises is that if demonetization was "necessary in the public interest".
- As RBI was in support of the demonetisation move with the government and both believed that this decision was for the greater good of the public and the long-term gains will more than compensate for the short-term pains, there is the opinion of RBI's independence being compromised.
- Had RBI not been convinced about the efficacy of the move, even then it couldn't have probably stopped it as Section 7 of the Act provides that the government can "direct" the central bank.
- The debate is that had if RBI opposed government and still government would go against RBI by going ahead with demonetisation, the appearance of it being autonomous would have been upheld.

History keeps repeating

- Though demonetisation has portrayed a picture of erosion of RBI's autonomy, the truth is that its autonomy was getting eroded before demonetisation.
- The history of central banking in India is replete with many incidences of friction between RBI and government.

- Previous RBI Governors Y V Reddy (2003-2008) fought on more on specific issues while Subbarao (2008-2013) fought on broader policy issues.
- Many a time, the fights were downplayed as creative tensions but they were not so when they actually took place.
- Though autonomy deals with the RBI's powers to set monetary policy rates, it has authority over debt issuance, currency issuance and regulating the banking sector.
- But in recent times, the authority is being challenged by making attempts to create a separate debt management agency, an independent payments regulator and inflation targeting framework. Few instances:
 - The government planned to create sovereign wealth funds and use of foreign exchange reserves for infrastructure development.
 - Earlier, finance ministry issued an ordinance empowering the finance ministry to resolve all disputes between the regulators through Financial Stability and Development Council. This was not acceptable to RBI as existence of such council shall make the public doubtful about independence of regulators.
 - The central bank and finance ministries had lot of duel wrt to interest rates.
 - RBI has also resisted government pressure on making the central bank's staff regulations statutory in character. Currently, the staff regulations are governed by the RBI's administrative decisions but once they become statutory, the approval of the government would be mandatory.

Conclusion

RBI and Ministry of Finance have debated over several issues. Such debates were restricted to certain segments of economy and they did not have the kind of impact on entire nation of 1.3 billion people which demonetisation envisages to have.

Had RBI not a supporter of demonetisation and still had to go ahead with it, it would have been a different perspective of fighting to maintain autonomy. But if RBI is convinced of demonetisation's success, there shouldn't be doubts on its autonomy. There can be instances when RBI and government can be on same page, for sake of public interest. Can't it be?

Connecting the dots:

- What do you understand by 'RBI's autonomy being compromised'? Substantiate your answer with suitable examples.

Municipal waste management- Waste to energy plants

To manage solid waste or garbage in cities, there are three steps to it

1. Segregation of biodegradable or wet waste from dry waste at source.

2. Once segregation is achieved, municipal governments can use wet waste to produce compost and biogas in biomethanation plants.
3. The dry waste, after removing recyclable elements, should go to waste-to-energy plants. These steps will reduce the volume of waste that remains to be sent to landfills.

Waste to energy plants

- From the municipal waste, it is possible to generate energy in form of electricity and/or heat from the primary treatment of waste. It is done through Waste-to-energy process.
- A number of waste-to-energy plants are coming up in urban India which use incineration, Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)-based combustion or conversion technologies such as pyrolysis and gasification.

Incineration

- A waste to energy plant based on incineration of unsegregated municipal solid waste in Delhi processes almost 2,000 tonnes of unsegregated municipal solid waste every day to feed into its boilers to produce 16 MW of electricity.
- These plants rely on mass burning of municipal solid waste, which involves complete combustion of miscellaneous waste materials into ash. *However it is a huge challenge to determine what is municipal solid waste.*
- The gases produced from such combustion may contain dioxins and furans, which are toxic and can be lethal.
- Thus, these plants need to have emission control filters of a very high standard to check the release of harmful gases into the atmosphere. It even came under fire initially as it did not comply with emission requirements but now it has received clearance from NGT.
- Another waste to energy plant in Delhi based on controlled combustion, produces RDF from segregated dry waste. *RDF is fuel produced from various types of wastes such as Municipal Solid wastes (MSW), industrial wastes or commercial wastes. RDF consists largely of combustible components of such wastes, as non recyclable plastics, paper cardboard, Labels and other corrugated materials.*
- This RDF is used in the same onsite boilers to generate electricity, performing at EU standards of emissions.
- The plant receives 1,300 tonnes of mixed waste every day which is reduced to about 40% of the total after segregation and then produces 12 MW of electricity.
- This technology is used efficiently in Singapore, Japan and many European countries with due precaution as they try to minimise the waste that needs to go to landfills.
- *The purpose of a landfill is to isolate waste from its surrounding environment, preventing water contamination and contact with air. However, landfills are not built to decompose trash. As a result, there is contamination of the soil and water with toxins, causing leachate and the release of greenhouse gases.*

Pyrolysis, gasification and plasma gasification

- *Pyrolysis: produces combustible tar/biooil and chars*
- *Gasification: produces combustible gas, hydrogen, synthetic fuels*
- *Plasma gasification process: produces rich syngas including hydrogen and carbon monoxide usable for fuel cells or generating electricity*

These are thermal technologies that are able to produce energy from waste and other fuels without direct combustion.

- In waste to energy plants, these technologies can deliver cleaner emissions but are considerably more expensive.
- It involves heating of solid waste at very high temperatures in an oxygen-controlled environment in a manner that the thermal reactions produce synthesis gas (or syngas).
- It has the advantage that it can be burned directly or transported through pipelines and/or tankers for use in electricity generation, refining, chemical and fertiliser industries.
- While syngas can be scrubbed and converted into a clean energy source, the technologies are expensive, compromising the commercial viability of plants based on conversion technologies.
- One such waste to energy plant based on pyrolysis-gasification technology was set up in Pune in 2012, but it has failed to deliver after repeated trials.
- It failed due to high cost of cleaning syngas and also because of a number of technical snags, including the fact that it had overestimated the calorific value of the waste and underestimated the moisture content.
- The company now produces RDF using 300 tonnes of dry municipal waste per day — less than half of what was intended in the design of the original plant.

Financial Viability

- The subsidies required to make waste to energy plants functional is a different challenge.
- These plants involve significant capital investment and the cost of energy produced is higher than from the grid. So, the subsidies can be provided only by the government.
- This is a beneficial investment as they contribute significantly in **resource recovery** and **saving on the energy cost of transportation**. Without them, there is diversion towards landfill which is more harmful and non-productive.
- Hence, there should be a transparent method to determine the maximum subsidy feasible through competitive bidding.
- Also, PPP model can be implemented here where both government and private sector cooperate to keep the cities clean and sanitised.

Role of state

- The pollution control boards set up by central and state government were expected to provide technical assistance and keep a check on the emissions/environmental footprints of waste-to-energy plants.
- However, they did not keep pace with rapidly evolving technology in the field of pollution control and were not able to check routine defaulters.
- As a result, it was recognised that a more empowered body was needed that could enforce adherence to environmental regulations.
- This led to formation of National Green Tribunal in 2010 as an independent judicial body by an Act of Parliament of India.
- As a judicial body in charge of supervisory jurisdiction over all environmental matters, NGT has poked the pollution control authorities and catalysed action from State Pollution Control Boards/Municipalities, especially in waste management.
- NGT has been setting the rules and backing them up with legal compensation and enforcement behind its rulings. Now it needs support from CPCB to carry out scientific evaluations of the environmental impact of waste-to-energy plants.

Conclusion

All these plants are involved in process of generating electricity. However, it needs to be understood that electricity generation from waste is not the most efficient way of generating electricity. Rather, it is a way of resource recovery from municipal solid waste and should be considered as a by-product of waste management. Though it is not a solution to India's energy problem, but if implemented at global emission standards, it could be a pathway to scientific and sustainable disposal of municipal solid waste, as there is scarcity of urban land in India and also helps in generating some much needed electricity.

Additionally, this can contribute in keeping environment clean and thereby contributing towards less greenhouse gas emissions as combustion technologies produce less GHG gases than landfills.

Connecting the dots:

- What is municipal waste management? Is it possible to generate energy out of waste? Examine.

Focussing on marginal farmers

A rising concern

- According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 2,195 marginal farmers and 3,618 small farmers reportedly committed suicide in 2015.
- Curiously, a larger number of small farmers rather than marginal farmers reportedly committed suicide in States like Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka.

- This shows that even small farmers are not spared by the agricultural crisis, and it is not observed only in traditional drought stricken states.
- *Small farmer= Has or cultivating agricultural land between 1 to 2 hectares.*
- *Marginal farmer= Has or cultivating agricultural land upto 1 hectare (2.5 acres)*

Where does the major concern lie?

- Farmer suicides have largely been attributed to debt, drought, crop failure or poor returns. However, farmers have been taking the drastic step regardless of a good rainfall year or bad, a good price year or a disappointing one.
- This is because they have low incomes but high costs of cultivation which is financed through loans. Somehow they manage to breakeven in a year and pay off their debts, a weather shock or price fluctuation will push them into yet another cycle of borrowing.
- Hence, there comes a time when they are unable to cope with mounting debt and the inability to take care of their families, they go for the extreme step.
- Agriculture became unviable when **input costs** associated with fertilizers, crop-protection chemicals and seeds rose, along with fixed costs associated with agricultural equipment such as tractors and submersible pumps.
 - Prices of many raw materials like fertilizers have jumped which raises the ultimate prices of crop too.
 - Hiring of agricultural labourer has become expensive with labour cost shooting upto Rs. 20/hour compared to Rs. 6-9/ hour previously.
 - Hiring of animals for agricultural mechanics is also rising.
 - Even the cost of labour, associated with both animal and machine labour, has also undergone a substantial jump.
- Thus, rise in input costs have risen the cultivation costs. It is evident from the fact that total cost of cultivation for wheat rose three times from 2004-05 to 2012-13.
- Traditionally, the blame for farmer suicides is cast upon local moneylender. But NCRB data highlights that 2,474 of the 3,000 farmers who were reported to have committed suicide in 2015 had loans from local banks. Whereas, only 9.8% of farmers had taken loans from moneylenders.
- Thus, formal indebtedness have cost more life than traditional moneylenders which seem to be more flexible than local banks.

An inclusive approach is the solution

Integrated pest management

- The indiscriminate and unilateral use of pesticides was the only plant protection tool during sixties and seventies for sustaining of agricultural production potential of the high yielding varieties under the intensive cropping systems.
- This has led to several ill-effects like human and animal health hazards, ecological imbalance, development of resistance in the pests to pesticides, pests resurgence and environmental pollution, destruction of natural enemies (bio-control agents) of pests

and increased level of pesticides residues in soil, water, food with the increased use of pesticides.

- Hence, IPM was needed as it is an eco-friendly approach which aims at keeping pest population at below economic threshold levels by employing all available alternate pest control methods and techniques.
- The farm policies should encourage integrated pest management with focus on combining biological, chemical, mechanical and physical means to combat pests with a long-term emphasis on eliminating or reducing use of pesticides.
- The use of chemical pesticides is advised as a measure of last resort when pest population in the crop crosses economic threshold levels.

Support local fertiliser industry

- The timely delivery of subsidies would improve working capital requirements, enabling industries to manage costs through internal sources rather than external loans.
- Delayed payments can cause loss of interest of Rs. 3,500 crore for fertilizer firms annually.
- Also, the state seed policies should focus on encouraging contract farming, along with identification of new genotypes for treating pest and disease syndromes, as well as adverse weather conditions.

Improved farming technologies

- The farm equipment policy needs a revamp with a focus on manufacturing farming equipment and implements that are currently imported.
- Precision-farming techniques like Systematic Rice Intensification can help increase seed production.
- Subsidies should be timely given to farmers seeking to buy equipment so that they have lower collateral requirements, longer moratoriums and payback periods.
- Even the entrepreneurs who seek to set up Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) for agricultural equipment should be given subsidies on timely basis.
- CHCs will encourage farm mechanisation through upgradation of technology for raising agriculture and horticulture crops.
- It will give farm machinery on rental basis to farmers who cannot afford to purchase high-end agricultural machinery and equipment apart from servicing old machinery. The centres will play a pivotal role in introducing high technology agriculture machinery to even ordinary farmers with the objective to boost crop production and improve quality of agriculture operations.

Burden-less institutional financing

- It has to be ensured that institutional finance is available and accessible. The benefits of such finance should be simplified and disbursed funds should be effectively monitored.

- States should seek to establish early warning signals, monitoring farmers who go past set limits and seek unsustainable loans.
- Village-wise lists of deeply indebted farmers should be prepared annually to identify farmers who are becoming extremely poor and may be potentially driven to committing suicide.
- Then, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, along with the local administration, should be tasked with analysing such lists for macro and local policy interventions, and devise timely loan restructuring initiatives, insurance claim settlements and better counselling to prevent farmers from losing their lives.
- Responding to vagaries of nature, insurance coverage should be expanded to all crops while reducing the rate of interest to nominal levels, with government support and an expanded Rural Insurance Development Fund.

Right to dignity

- Farmers should be also looked from eye of humanity and treated with dignity and respect.
- Agriculture is facing tough times currently and thus farmers are struggling to survive, make a living, sustain families and educate children by being associated in agricultural sector.

Conclusion

Systematic changes are required to make agriculture a sustainable and stick-to-employment sector. Indian agriculture is still rainfed which has increased the chances of becoming vulnerable to climate changes. Small and marginal farmers should be encouraged to use new farming techniques like rainwater harvesting, watershed management, micro-irrigation by providing them financial support to create and maintain such agricultural infrastructure. Adequate crop insurance will motivate them to carryout their agricultural practices without huge concerns. Farmers should be educated about new techniques and schemes through KVKs, interaction with scientists and various mediums of communication. Thus, an integrated farm management approach should be undertaken to support the marginal and small farmers who require more support to sustain their livelihood and prevent them from taking their lives.

Connecting the dots:

- Indian farmers have long been susceptible to political, economic and climatic conditions of the country, which has resulted into their loss of lives. Determine how the farmers, especially small and marginal, can be made to move away from path of suicide?

Problems and Reforms in Higher Education

Introduction

Access, Equity, and Quality are the three benchmarks to judge any education system. As per reports and recent trends, India has not been up to the mark in all the three areas. As a result the education system in India has been in a poor condition and needs urgent and comprehensive reforms.

Problems of Higher Education in India

Access related challenges

The socio economic condition of our country and its people leads to high rate of drop out. This leads to low gross enrolment ratio in higher education. The affordability of education, quality of schools and social issues such as early marriage force the children to opt out of education. Those who do go for complete higher education are later discouraged due to social discrimination faced at work as compared to the other well off sections of the society.

Admission related challenges

Students who are seeking admission into higher education institutions have to go through an admission test. Even these students face challenge in terms of fees that they have to pay to the coaching institutions which help in preparation of the entrance exams. Financial limitations and economic occupations are a major reason for students not taking up higher education.

Quality Concerns

No doubt the number of universities and colleges has grown manifold in the last 60 years of independent India but still the quantity and quality have not progressed in the same direction. Various shortfalls in term of quality are as follows:

- Shortage of good quality faculty leading to high number of vacancies and recruitment of under qualified teachers.
- Stark deficiencies of library books, laboratory facilities, computer and broadband internet.
- Infrastructural deficiencies in terms of buildings, classrooms, sports and extracurricular facilities.

Affordability Issues

Two-thirds of enrolment in higher education is in private institutions which charge very high capitation fees and work on a profit motive. Fees at such institutions are more than double of government institutions. This makes education highly unaffordable. Southern India has also seen a recent trend wherein higher education is now turning into a business and the colleges and universities are run as commercial enterprises.

Curriculum related challenges

On account of curriculum the education system has to face the following challenges:

- Emphasis on rote-learning.
- Outdated curriculum.
- Exam oriented learning and lack of practical education.
- Graduates lack basic language and cognitive skills. O
- Only 20% graduates from engineering colleges in India are employable in IT companies.

Other Issues

- Quality of post-graduate research is much below the global standards.
- Poor performance of India institutions in the global university rankings.
- Absence of regular institution quality and faculty reviews.
- Corruption and nepotism in appointments of faculty and their promotions.

Suggested Reforms and Strategy

Promotion of Vocational Education

- Universal access at minimal tuition fees should be given to the students with equivalent focus on vocational education as well.
- Institutes for vocational education should be established all across the state with option of evening classes as well. This will allow access to learning to those who are engaged in economic activities.
- Credits on a regular basis should be allocated to judge the performance of the students.
- Public Private Partnership model should be used to finance these institutes. Private sector should also be given priority access to the students for recruitment in their organisations.

Reforms in Regular Education

The students who do not wish to pursue vocational education can opt for general science and humanities subjects. The performance of these students should also be monitored on the basis of credits and tests.

Improvement in Access and Quality

- Professional schools should be established for subjects like Law, Business, Engineering and Medical. In these cases where the tuition fees are high, large number of options for student loans should be available at friendly terms.
- Public universities for specialized branches of science and humanities should be opened in limited number. The limited number will promote quality as both financial resources and faculty will be used in a more efficient and effective manner.
- Very selective research universities should be opened with scholarships for students and no tuition fee. Departments and institutes should be reorganized in a manner which focuses on multi-disciplinary research.

Faculty Related Reforms

These reforms are one of the most important reforms for addressing the challenges faced by higher education in India.

- Faculty selection and promotion should be entirely the responsibility of the faculty in consultation with various relevant stakeholders.
- The most important criterion for judging faculty will be teaching quality and the quality of research undertaken by the faculty.
- New appointments should be done on basis of presentation of research paper in open seminars where the faculty can be questioned by the public as well.
- Regular mid-term appraisals should be carried out by both internal and external review committees.
- Promotion should be totally based on performance and not on seniority.
- Flexible salary structures should be there to reward exemplary performances.

Other Reforms

- Distance learning should be fully utilized. India should also promote the usage of international Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) system.
- Higher academic institutions need to be in sync with the needs and occurrences of the society and the economy. Connection between the ongoing research in universities and the innovations in the local industrial and commercial economy should be very strong.
- No involvement of politicians, administrators or regulatory bodies such as UGC in personnel selection.
- Periodic audits should be carried out to ensure that the budget assigned has been used in an efficient manner.

Conclusion

Just like every coin has two sides, there is a negative side to each suggested reform strategy as well which has to be balanced as well.

As and when the above reforms are carried out, it has to be ensured that non-interference and autonomy does not let universities to degrade in terms of quality and promote an atmosphere of nepotism and mediocrity. To address this problem competition should be promoted among universities at all times. As a result of the competition the institutions will always be cautious of losing quality faculty and students.

Also, caste reservations alone cannot address the concerns of the disadvantaged sections. It is essential to ensure employability of the graduates. This will, in the long run, bring more satisfaction and benefit to the needy sections of the society. Along with the reforms, these precautionary measures will promote equity and access to education.

Connecting the dots

- India needs to address three pillars of equity, access and affordability in higher education. Highlight how the education system of India has failed in these aspects and a reform strategy for the same.

Zero tolerance towards child exploitation

In news: After almost two decades, Government of India decided to ratify International Labour Organisation's two conventions which protect child against child labour.

International Labour Organisation

- It was created as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice.
- The driving forces for ILO's creation arose from security, humanitarian, political and economic considerations.
- ILO, the only tripartite U.N. agency, brings together **governments, employers and workers representatives** of 187 member States
- **Mandate:** to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

Conventions of ILO- International labour standards are legal instruments drawn up by the ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers). They are either:

- **Conventions** - legally binding international treaties that may be ratified by member states or
- **Recommendations** - serve as non-binding guidelines

The ILO's Governing Body has identified eight conventions considered as fundamental principles and rights at work

1. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention
2. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention
3. Forced Labour Convention
4. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention
5. Minimum Age Convention
6. Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention
7. Equal Remuneration Convention
8. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention

India decides to ratify two important conventions

Convention 182- On worst forms of child labour

- This calls for need to formulate legislation for prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

- Adopted by ILO in 1999

Convention 138- On minimum Age Employment

- Minimum age for employment should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling (14 years of age in India's case).
- Adopted by ILO in 1973

They are two of the eight core labour conventions

Child exploitation in India

- *Child Labour is the practice of having children engage in economic activity, on a part- or full-time basis. The practice deprives children of their childhood and is harmful to their physical and mental development.*
- Around 9.8 million children are officially out of school and from those 4.3 million children are part of labour activities.
- Child labour has propelled vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty.
- It is also the basis of organised crimes such as human trafficking, terror and drug mafia.

Challenges faced and changes made:

- Main bottleneck in ratifying conventions 182 and 138 was addressing forced or compulsory recruitment of children and raising age of employment in hazardous occupations from 14 to 18 years.
- However, when Gol passed Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2016 prohibiting the employment of children up to 14 years of age, and children up to 18 years of age in hazardous occupations, it was imperative to ratify convention 182 and 138.

Understanding the essence

The decision to ratify the convention and passing of child labour bill makes India's intent clear of not tolerating the exploitation of children any longer.

The government will now take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour:

- Child slavery (including the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and forced recruitment for armed conflict)
- Child prostitution and their use in pornography
- Use of children for illicit activities such as drug trafficking
- Exposure of children to any hazardous work which is likely to harm their health, safety or morals.

Under the provisions of Convention 182 and 138, there is no fixed deadline by which India has to eliminate worst forms of child labour.

Will child labour be finally eliminated?

- There have been concerns raised by many regarding the kind of 'amendment' made in CLPRA Act, 1986.
- There seems to be still lack of national commitment in abolishing all forms of child labour as the amendment in the law provides for employment of children under 14 years in 'family enterprise'.
- Though the condition of working is only outside 'school hours', it is bound to affect child's health as well as learning aptitude as the child will be forced to work and earn income.
- A new category of adolescents (14-18 years) has been created who can be employed in 'non-hazardous' occupations.
- Thus, the child has to work anyways and contribute economically to the family without focussing solely on his education and development.
- The amendments made merely to comply with international conventions is not the way forward. There has to be complete elimination of child labour as children from poor and marginalised sections, especially Dalits, are still in danger of being deprived of both the joys of childhood and their constitutional right to education.

Conclusion

This is a leap of India and its children to a much better society as this decision will have path-breaking impact on the lives of those who are forced to remain on the margins and are subject to exploitative conditions. These laws and conventions should assist the implementing institutions in eliminating all forms child labour. However, ending child labour requires language of compassion and humanity that would help accelerate the global movement against childhood exploitation. Increased moral courage, public concern, social empathy, political will and the implementation of resources invested in the development and protection of children are inevitable to eliminate child labour.

Thus, to achieve great reforms, the government, people and other stakeholders have to move in one direction with sincere efforts and dedication to change the prevailing circumstances.

It is crucial to engrain in mind that investment in children is an investment in future.

[Jallikattu and the debate surrounding it](#)

Historical background

- The ancient sport of Jallikattu finds mention in Sangam Literature, nearly 2000 years ago, in a text called *Kalithokai*, where five long poems (approx. 300 lines) provide its elaborate description.
- The *Kalithokai* poems depicted the mood of carnival where young men 'embraced the bull' ('*eru thazhuvuthal*') and tamed it. The focus of the poems is on the valour and the violence that accompanies this heroic feat.

- Though there has been evidence from prehistoric times capturing bulls and attempting to tame them in nearly 70 ancient rock art sites discovered in Tamil Nadu, it is the modern Tamil literary prose where there is extended description of Jallikattu.
- B.R. Rajam Aiyar, disciple of Swami Vivekananda, had his Tamil Novel *Kamalambal Charithiram* written in 1893 which depicted the celebration of this sport.
- Unlike *Kalithokai* which is set in pastoral zone, the *Kamalambal Charithiram* has naturalistic locations of Madurai and Tirunelveli where the sport itself is overlapped in the dynamics of rural power structure.
- In later books, the stories revolve around the sport being engulfed in caste conflicts and as a result of which, the festival is suspended. But then it is restored by the advent of the Gandhian movement and for the first time, the sport is celebrated as the valorous sport of Tamils. Over a period of time, there have been many novels, short stories and films made on this topic.
- Considered the *locus classicus* of Jallikattu, *Vaadi Vaasal*, first as short story and then as novel has been in demand since its first publication in 1959. This indicates its literary merit but also cultural importance accorded to it. The history of the literary representation of Jallikattu is testimony to its long-lived attraction.
- The sport, though undoubtedly is reflective of social inequities, but has not restrained to few dominating castes. By the 1980s, Jallikattu transcended its regional and caste definition and became emblematic of Tamil culture.

The current issue

- The sport is part of Tamil culture organised during the Pongal festivities.
- The **present form** of Jallikattu involves mass-participant ritual of hundreds of men chasing a bull and trying to hold on to its hump or stop it by pulling at or twisting its tail instead of **traditional form** of one man against one animal.
- Also, Jallikattu term in Tamil refers to coins tied onto the bull's forehead, and the winner is said to have tamed the bull if he could take off the coins. Earlier, it was a rite of passage for a man seeking a girl for marriage. Thus, the meaning and essence of this sport changed over the years.
- In 2013, under the watch of the Animal Welfare Board of India, the onus was Tamil Nadu government to ensure that Jallikattu did not violate the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. But, the efforts to conduct a safe and cruelty free Jallikattu failed.
- In 2014, Supreme Court judgment had termed Jallikattu 'inherently cruel' and specifically held that no regulations or guidelines should be allowed to dilute or defeat the spirit of a welfare legislation like Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960 and constitutional principles (Art 21, Art 48 and Art 51A).
- The judgment had classified the bull as a draught animal not meant for running but walking under the Prevention of Cruelty to Draught and Pack Animals Rules, 1965.

- The continued ban evoked strong response amongst the people in Tamil Nadu. And bowing down to popular sentiment, now the Tamil Nadu state government is trying to pass an ordinance to allow conduct of Jallikattu, which carries a serious risk of judicial rebuke.
- Here, the bulls will be put in the list of performing animals in the state which will allow the conduct of Jallikattu.
- The better way to handle the situation is to rather convince SC that a Jallikattu is possible where the safety of spectators as well as elimination of cruelty to animals is possible.
- Another way is that Tamil Nadu government can enact a law to treat Jallikattu as a traditional sport. This will make the law valid under Constitution as sports are in exclusive jurisdiction of states. Such a law will allow the sport subject to stringent conditions such as staying 100 feet away from the animal, no stone throwing or doing any acts of cruelty. If any misbehaviour or violation of SC orders found and proved, there shall be punishment for the same.
- It is all right if popular sentiment can influence legislation, but it cannot undermine the rule of law.

Is there a hidden agitation?

- What was a rural, semi-urban protest, soon saw urban citizens of Chennai coming out in protest of Jallikattu ban.
- Here, the instantly swelling protest has to do more with Tamil Pride than Jallikattu.
- The Tamil people have been brought together for different reasons such as decades-long rule by two 'exploitative' political parties; the Centre's stand in the last leg of the Sri Lankan war; the feeling of being abandoned in the Cauvery water issue; Kudankulam and GAIL pipeline projects, insistence on learning Hindi, the government's cold response on the farmers' issues for years; the drought, the Chennai floods, the Tamil fishermen issue, among others.
- Though the current protest is about Jallikattu and Tamil pride, the people have long suppressed their dissatisfaction against centre and state governments. This youth agitation should be addressed before it takes gigantic form of lawlessness.

Conclusion

The protestors have won the fight against the state but it needs greater introspection into the sport and its importance. If Jallikattu has to be a part of Tamil culture, it has to be conducted with protection to animals and human beings as well as regulated by an authority. Age old traditions and cultures need to be revisited if they are in violation with fundamental constitutional principles. Even child marriage was a cultural tradition before it was adjudicated as a crime.

(Note: Part 2 shall cover detailed aspect about 'why not to ban jallikattu', 'religious interference by state machinery' and 'rationality vs sentiments').

Connecting the dots:

- Why is Jallikattu enshrined into Tamil culture with such valour? The mass protests surrounding the agitation against the ban brings out in open the tussle between old cultural traditions, populist government decisions and pragmatic judicial intervention. Analyse.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Analysis**Introduction**

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) has been one of the most important programmes of the government in the past one year. Major share of the finances are being spent on this programme, officials are being regularly monitored to ensure best results.

Lately, the focus has shifted from construction of toilets only to declaring districts and states Open Defecation Free (ODF). States such as Sikkim, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have already attained this status and other states are also working towards achieving the ODF status.

However, various other aspects such as governance and implementation have to be analysed to review the performance of this programme.

Features of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

The Government of India launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) on 2nd October, 2014 with the following objectives:

- Eliminate open defecation,
- Conversion of insanitary toilets to pour flush toilets,
- Eradication of manual scavenging,
- 100% collection and scientific processing/disposal reuse/recycle of Municipal Solid Waste,
- Behavioural change in people and awareness generation among the citizens about sanitation and its linkages with public health,
- Strengthening of urban local bodies to design, execute and operate systems, and
- To enhance private sector participation.

The above objectives are to be achieved with the help of the following components:

- Construction of Household Toilets,
- Community and Public Toilets,
- Solid Waste Management,
- Information, Education & Communication (IEC) and Public Awareness,

Positives so far

- A lot of effort and resources, both personnel and financial, are being devoted towards achieving the ODF status in almost all districts of the country.
- With immense focus on the SBA by the government, this programme has been at the centre of focus for political appraisal.
- As a result of the scale of this campaign and the government's continuous focus on sanitation, health and hygiene, SBA has received a very high-level of political commitment and time-bound targets.

Challenges in the Success of SBA**Data Related Challenges**

- Adequate data on the basis of third party surveys and evaluation is not available to assist in performance evaluation.
- Whatever data has been recorded reveals a lot of inconsistencies. Accuracy of data is lacking since there is duplication of names and false toilet construction has been reported in many cases.

Quality Concerns

- Quality of toilets being constructed and performance of other initiatives is an issue.
- No training is being undertaken to mobilise all the people involved. Officials of the local government and those responsible for sanitation are not given any training for community mobilization.

Administrative Concerns

- Even though Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) have a major role to play still there is lack of institutional capacity at the grassroots level to deliver sanitation services.
- The high level of political focus that SBA has received has brought along with it immense performance pressure for essential stakeholders such as district collectors. This pressure has had a negative impact on the officers incharge.
- For the success of this programme a lot of investment in terms of administrative capabilities has to be made. Since the same is lacking, there is inefficiency in the performance and also diversion from the prime objective.

Citizen Engagement

- Since the district collectors and other officers incharge are supposed to work towards targets, they have resorted to penalization of citizens.
- Coercive measures such as disconnecting power supply and withholding supply of rations are being used in case of failure of public to construct toilets.

- Citizens are being fined for not constructing toilets and being forced to take loans from banks since the government gives the money after construction of the toilet.
- There is limited interaction between the government officials and the citizens who need to be made aware of the programme and their roles and responsibilities.

Reforms Strategy

- Citizens need to be involved in activities to spread awareness and for the purpose of demand creation. Citizen participation has to be increased.
- Not always will a carrot and stick approach work. Hence, the bureaucracy and the government officials involved should not use coercive measures. Rather citizens should be incentivized and motivated.
- Community interaction should be encouraged. Civil society institutions need to be approachable to the people. Such collective action will go a long way in the success of this campaign.
- Local government has to be very proactive in their work. Organs of local government need to be strengthened with sufficient powers to work towards the objectives of SBA.

Conclusion

There is no fixed path towards success for SBA. It has to be a combination of many elements. The government needs to combine top down and bottom up methods, role modelling and advertisements have to be combined with citizen participation and community interaction. With so much of political willingness and support for the programme, it is time that government also empowers local government in the best manner.

Connecting the dots

- Discuss the provisions of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Critically analyse the performance of the programme with suggestions to improve the outcomes.

Civil Services Reforms

Introduction

Indian Civil Services better known as All Indian Services is considered a steel frame of the country. The relevance is understood in the words of Sardar Patel's who is regarded as the father of Indian Civil Services. Reforms should be continuous and ongoing process which unfortunately has not been the case.

What is Civil Service?

Civil Services are generally defined to be public services constituted by the government to translate all its plans and programmes into implementable action.

Status of Civil Services in India

- Civil Services in India has British legacy.
- The attempt to make it Indian, Civil and truly service oriented has been on since independence.
- Including Administrative Reform Commission I and II along with many other commissions set up time to time have suggested a host of reforms.
- The tragedy has been that Civil Services still holds the colonial mentality and have been ivory towered.
- Corruption has been a serious malice which affects the society at large.
- Civil Servants get constitutional protection under article 311.

Recent Government actions

- The Central government's recent decision to compulsorily retire two Indian Police Service (IPS) officers and one Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer for 'non-performance' is bold and laudable.
- The compulsory retirements are in pursuance of the service rules that contemplate a review either when an officer reaches the age of 50 or completes 25 years of service.

Benefits Galore

- The public should know that our All India Services and the Central Services are paid well by Indian standards.
- Each Pay Commission has enlarged the civil service pay packet and perquisites. You don't have to exert yourself on the job to earn a promotion.
- If you did not go to jail for some grave impropriety while in service, you still get to reach the peak and earn the maximum pension

Problem Areas

- While the quality in top 30 percent of AIS is still pristine, probably better than yore, there is sharp deterioration at the lower level of batches.
- Corruption has become rampant among AIS, which was unheard of previously. There are even officers who perform treasury duties for political funds, guard, distribute and manage political election chests – many of them have become brokers to politicians.
- It is now unquestionable that there is a lot of dead-wood in the AIS state bureaucracies, an alarmingly growing phenomenon triggered by a variety of self-reinforcing political factors.

- Lethargy, lassitude, a feeling of irrelevance are the main forces, which over time drive extremely bright, able, arguably best in the world men and women, to feel unwanted, unwelcome and unable to find a role of contribution for themselves.
- Only around 10 per cent of officers remain current in their knowledge and exert themselves to keep the administrative system in shape.

Obstacle to Reforms

- Lack of political will in spite of clearly laid reforms necessary by number of commissions.
- The judiciary that overturns or stays every administrative action against an erring senior officer.
- Constitutional protection that makes the process tedious. (http://www.img.kerala.gov.in/docs/downloads/cp_to_cs.pdf)
- Conflict of interests and politicisation with lack of neutrality.

Remedies

- An independent body like UPSC should be tasked with periodic reforms (UPSC has limited ambit of only recruitment).
- A solution to judicial deadlock should be developed.
- Civil Services Neutrality is a necessity that has to be practised in letter and spirit.
- Reforms suggested by many commissions should be implemented with due diligence

Conclusion

Civil Services is the crucial nervous system of the administration. The success and failure of the government efforts will be dependent on the dynamic and alacrity of the civil services. In this light the reform measures of the government has to be supported - one should forget the short term pain, and see it in its right perspective as the most important development of the past 70 years to reverse the trends as a first step to bring India to the forefront of the world's nations.

The administrative apparatus has a key role in the implementation process – cleaning up and overhauling it and make it work is a top most priority. Indian civil services, with its high potential, will take the message and respond. A high quality effective civil services are a *sine qua non* for development.

Connecting the dots

- Indian Civil Services considered as the steel frame is also regarded as fossilized. In light of the recent reform measures of the Government of India highlight the role of civil services in governance. Critically analyse the reforms since independence.

Jallikattu and the debate surrounding it (Part 2)

The protests around Jallikattu gained momentum which made the state government to pass an ordinance to allow conduct of Jallikattu, which was banned by the Supreme Court in 2014 along with bullock cart races in Maharashtra and Punjab, Kambala (buffalo race) in Karnataka and Dhirio (bull fight) in Goa.

Let us critically analyse arguments for and against Jallikattu to assist you in developing an opinion on the subject.

Why it should not be banned?

Protect the native breed

- The native breeds require less water, can withstand higher temperature and have a low metabolic rate. Therefore, they require less food and can sustain on food not required by man.
- Previously, cattle were used for tilling, pulling carts, and giving milk. Since machines replaced them in some of these activities, and as their milk production was comparatively less than that of hybrid varieties, Jallikattu was the way to prevent their extinction.
- Native breeds have several advantages than the hybrid varieties. Native breeds can reproduce about 10 times in their life time, whereas hybrid varieties could yield calves only about 3-4 times. Native breeds would graze as a herd and insemination is easier.

Loss to dairy industry

- There is a concern that dairy lobby wants all native breeds to be eradicated so that they can import exotic breeds. This is sure shot way to earn excessively as exotic breeds cannot survive in the harsh sub-tropical conditions of India.
- If the native breeds are eliminated and foreign breeds are imported, multinational commercial companies will dominate the dairy industry in India keeping at stake livelihoods of millions.
- If there is ban, there will be increased supply of bulls for the meat trade which may create shortage of milk in the market.

Not upholding Constitutional provisions

- The practicing and sustaining of distinct Heritage and Cultural traditions are protected under Article 29(1) of Fundamental Rights
- Also, it forms of part of Art 51A (f) Fundamental Duties- to value and preserve the rich heritage of the composite culture to which Jallikattu also belongs.
- Art 48 guides the state to endeavour to preserve and improve the breeds and prevent slaughter of cows and calves and other draught and milk cattle. Hence, it was important that union government had to intervene.

One-sided argument

- It is possible that SC was influenced by documentation done by the Animal Welfare Board of India, a statutory body under the Centre, and animal rights groups like PETA,

that served as evidence that the Jallikattu animals were physically and mentally tortured.

- Here, the other side of the issue was not looked into deeply and hypothetical assumptions were made based on exaggerated claims by animal activists and organisations.

Why it should be banned?

Promotes discrimination

- It is a 'sport' which is practised only by upper castes. No Dalits or lower castes are allowed to participate. It is a male tradition and no women are allowed to participate. Hence it is a tradition which discriminates among humans by promoting patriarchy and casteism in name of 'Tamil tradition'.

Animals for human entertainment

- It is a form of torture for animals who have no idea why it is being pounced on or surrounded.
- It also causes mental stress as well as physical harm to animals which is against Art 21 of Indian Constitution for Right to Live and Right to dignity for animals too.

Scientific means for indigeneity

- The bulls engaged in Jallikattu are sold for a higher price which is generally an incentive for the person who rears them. The sport plays a marginal role in conservation of the breed. Hence it is medieval to identify a herd bull through method like Jallikattu.
- There are better methods to identify a herd bull such as identifying desirable heritable qualities in the animal, ensuring pedigree (purebred or cross-breed), reading expected progeny differences, breeding soundness (ability to get cows pregnant), and semen examination.
- Alternatives such as artificial insemination should also be considered. A herd book or register can be established.

The other debates

Tradition vs. Constitution

- The constitution of India guarantees right to protect religion but subject to reasonable restrictions arising from issues of morality, health and public order.
- Torture of animals for human amusement is not acceptable. Hence, the tradition has to be in conformity with the Constitution which calls for right to live as well as duty to protect culture.

State and religious interference

- A democracy allows peoples' will to be heard and be supreme but it doesn't entail to accept culture and traditions which are unbecoming of a society.

- The judiciary has the right to take notice of and enter into discussions where a right of living thing is concerned. In name of traditions and culture, it is not acceptable to violate constitutional ideals.
- No doubt, the judiciary should completely be made aware of the facts and enlightened with valid arguments which can make it possible for judiciary to make informed decision and roll out critical orders.
- Tradition and culture are not immune to change. And hence, the rights arguments cannot be made ignoring the cultural context. The polity and the society need to be made aware of the pros and cons of the age-old traditions which might not be conducive in this age of instant information if they violate humane rights.

Theological to modern society

- A "theological" argument would be driven by religious beliefs and sentiments.
- A "rational" man's argument chooses reason over sentiment. In the age of reason, the demand that people obey laws must be rooted in reason and not sentiment.
- We need to evaluate our customs and practices as per present values and need.
- The task of modernisation entails the destabilisation of many institutions and practices. Our founding fathers, Hindus and Muslims alike, in the process of seeking to modernise India, had destabilised and uprooted many traditional practices and institutions. For instance they destabilised and outlawed many discriminatory practices such as hierarchy of castes, sati and untouchability.
- It doesn't fulfil the essential religious practice criteria. Moreover even age old traditions like Sati and Devadasi are also condoned on the basis of religion but that doesn't make them right. We must as a society do what's just, humane and democratic.

Moving forward

Under the Convention on Biological Diversity and heritage status practices worldwide, it is customary that these ancient traditional practices are left as they are but with rules to organise and regulate them. Thus, instead of blanket ban, an overview of the sport can be undertaken with various protective measures for animals as well as spectators. The livestock keepers conserve the ancient breeds and should be encouraged to so with bringing bulls back into agriculture and educate society about the virtues of native genes in agriculture and animal husbandry. Also, animal rights activists should be more empathetic to cultures and should not be biased in their opinions pertaining to one community or religion in handling the animal rights.

Connecting the dots:

- In your opinion, should Jallikattu be conducted? Critically analyse.
- Jallikattu has once again initiated the debate on locking horns between state and culture. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

The Need for a Basic Income for All

Introduction

The concept of basic income is not new to the socialist world and the policy makers and economists promoting the welfare approach. Basic income was discussed as early as 16th century by Thomas More who suggested it to be an unconditional universal basic income for all adults regardless of other income sources. Recently in the 20th century as well, Nobel Laureate Bertrand Russell emphasised on a basic income important for basic necessities.

What Constitutes Basic Income?

Basic income refers to a minimum income which can provide for basic necessities sufficiently for all. It should be given to all irrespective of their employment status. Additionally, even post education if a person is not employed, he / she should be given the basic income.

Contemporary Examples

The world over, policymakers from various advanced countries are considering to include basic income as part of the social welfare model in their countries. Finland, on a pilot basis, is planning to select two thousand unemployed persons who will receive certain basic monthly tax free income for next two years. A similar experiment of guaranteed unconditional basic income was done in Madhya Pradesh also in 2014.

Basic Income - Rationale

Economists and policy makers advocate the provision of basic income due to following reasons:

- For the purpose of fighting inequality.
- To tackle slow wage growth and aid financial security.
- To tackle increasing fears of advancing automation due to globalisation and immigrants competing for jobs which are meant for the local population.
- To reduce the gap between haves and have nots.

Benefits arising from Basic Income Provision

Studies and surveys on the basis of trials and pilot studies have reported various benefits of providing basic income to people which are as follows:

- The nutrition intake of those suffering from poverty rose. Data provides that consumption of pulses, fresh vegetables and meat was up by huge number of 1,000%, 888% and 600% respectively.
- People were also able to spend more on healthcare and as a result, incidence of illness dropped.

- Among other social indicators education also witnessed progress in terms of enrolment and attendance, especially among female students.
- Basic income lived up to its rationale of reducing the gap between rich and poor and led to more equitable development.
- People living in villages worked harder than before and also took up multiple economic activities with the help of the basic income.
- With this confirmed source of income, indebtedness of people decreased and the capacity to save increased, hence placing them in a better financial position.
- Basic income acts as a kind of a social security for the weak, unwell or physically challenged.
- Also for people who are skilled and have employment but are not able to receive quality wages due to lack of opportunities or other reasons, basic minimum income acts as a supplement to the existing economic resources.

Way Forward for India

- Along with the National Food Security Act, MGNREGA, a plan for provision of basic income can be a game changer for the country. The Government of India has also decided to dedicate a special chapter to basic income as a tool for poverty reduction in the upcoming Economic Survey.
- However, the government needs to be cautious of its impact on the fiscal deficit.
- A major reformation will have to be done to ensure smooth implementation of guarantee all three basic requirements for the poor i.e. food, basic income and wage jobs.
- As a part of these reform measures, the government needs to work on the funding, implementation and mid-term review of MGNREGA.
- To ensure the financial viability the government will have to replace existing subsidies and other such existing programmes. This will help in elimination of all over lapping policies and check the expenditure of the government as well.
- The government can implement the basic income using the Socio-Economic Caste Census.

Connecting the dots

- A minimum basic income provision can be helpful in poverty reduction, livelihood security and improvement of social indicators. Discuss. Also comment on the administrative feasibility and financial viability of such a programme for India.

Related article

Idea of a UBI for India

<http://iasbaba.com/2016/10/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-18th-october-2016/>

Is democracy limited only to elections?

Democracy and India

- Dr. Ambedkar defined democracy as a means to bring about a significant change in the living conditions of the depressed without resorting to bloodshed.
- In a democracy, people have sovereign power to consciously participate in the democratic process of choosing their representatives who would ultimately reinforce their will.
- However, there are certain basic foundations to be created to have successful democracy in India:
 - Empowerment of weaker sections of society like poor, disabled, minorities, women to exercise their democratic rights like participation in elections, access to fundamental rights etc.
 - Elected representatives should perform sincerely and not misuse power.
 - Presence of strong public opinion
 - Eradication of social evils
 - Tolerance and communal harmony among people
 - Space to express dissent and freedom to criticise
- Of these, election process is one of the first means to realise the ideals of democracy as it allows people to choose their representatives to create a sustainable liveable society for them.

Assertion of political equality

- When the constitution was being prepared, universal suffrage was easily accepted which was morally daring act of the nationalist movement.
- This assertion of political equality marked the creation of a new India at the time of independence.
- So far, India's greatest achievement has been adhering to political equality in every election. The scale, excitement and dignity of Indian election has been such that it has evoked positive response about India's democracy.
- The Election Commission has emerged as the vital institution that safeguards this cornerstone of modern Indian identity.
- The commitment required to institutionalise political equality, ensure that each voter was recognised, transformed the character of the Indian state. The mundane act of preparing lists is not just a bureaucratic exercise; it is the fundamental act through which each individual is given political standing.
- Hence, elections formed a critical portion of upholding the democratic values.

Democracy and elections- which follows what?

- Elections are one of the events that have united Indians. So far, the state and the citizens have zealously safeguarded, enthusiastically participated in and lively celebrated this event.
- However, it is frequently being realised that the democracy is found to limiting itself to just to election process and elections cannot always be safeguarding the democracy.
- Sometimes, the concentration of power gets legitimised by elections under certain circumstances which can be contrary to ideals of democracy- liberty, equality of opportunity, freedom to express and opinionise, regard for due process and non-arbitrariness in state action and more.
- It has been joked that, in many countries elections exist for democracy but in India, democracy exists for elections. Though it can be taken as political humour, it raises questions about the relation between election and democracy in India.
- Whether election is the floor or ceiling of democracy? Whether meaning of India's democracy is limited to conduct of elections? If elections hide and make subordinate almost all other issues in society?
- The great quality of election is that it politicises all aspects of Indian society. Whether it is class, caste, religion or income. But this quality can also be a handicap if they are expressed against the constitutional values to attain electoral power and position. Thus, there is need to reflect between elections and constitutional values.
- The civic structures of the state and its administration have to be made by imbibing the democratic values in them so that the elections and its result don't shake the foundations.
- The founders of the constitution, particularly Dr. Ambedkar, were absolutely clear that entering into a relationship with fellow citizens through a constitution was a very special type of relationship. This relationship was not founded on kinship or bloodties but based on shared values.
- The universal adult suffrage embossed new modality of human relationships and the right to vote created a new political structure. This structure would have people respond to each other as fellow citizens, honour individuality as well as arguments of opposition.
- This would make the criticism of government possible without fear and at the same time continue to have respect for constitutional framework.
- However, constitutional politics has been threatened from many sources like when community sentiment is evoked without evaluating underlying moral claims. If community sentiment becomes the basis of legislation or administration, it negates the promise of modern constitutionalism.
- Constitution ideal is also threatened when electoral politics becomes too corrupt or when the state becomes an extended arm of the rich.
- When the constitutional politics becomes subordinate to individual leaders and there is impatience in the institutions, challenges surface to maintain constitutional values.

Conclusion

Elections are part of democracy and a shining example that overcome tremendous odds, to consistently bring more and more people each year to the ballot box, through a process that is efficient, quick and uses technology for the advantage of its citizens. The aim of election should be to elect representatives that have the abilities to uphold the constitutional principles and assist democracy to never assault constitutional core. Elections suspend the everyday reality of inequality of wealth and status that dominate day-to-day life and asserts popular sovereignty on that day. This is the strength of elections which manifest the idea of democracy. However, practice of democracy should not be limited to conduct of elections and further it in many spheres. With major elections round the corner, it needs to be asserted that the success of India's democracy depends on believing in constitutional values and practising the same.

Connecting the dots:

- Election exists for democracy or democracy exists for election? Analyse.
- Election is the first step to climb the ladder of successful democracy. Do you agree?

Farmers' deaths: Why and What next?

- Tamil Nadu has been troubled by a severely deficit monsoon which triggered the worst drought in 140 years and the farmer suicides news are now resurfacing in farming heartlands of the state.
- Over 100 farmers, mostly in Cauvery delta have reportedly committed suicide during a period of one month and the numbers are rising.
- Various farmers' associations have expressed their concerns before the State government and have demanded immediate relief measures to put a break on farmer suicides.
- The CM of Tamil Nadu declared entire state drought-hit after an official report was submitted which mentioned extent of drought and farm deaths. Measures worth Rs. 160 crore and Rs. 350 crores to alleviate the water crisis in urban and rural local bodies respectively were also announced.
- Fund allocation to meet the fodder needs of cattle, rescheduling of farm loans, cancellation of land tax and compensation for lost crop to drought-affected farmers has also been initiated.
- Promises have also been made to provide employment to the rural population at an outlay of Rs. 3,400 crore by engaging them in desilting of canals and tanks and extending employment under the MGNREGS by 50 days.
- These measures look promising and beneficial to distressed farmers but the underlying rootcause of the farm suicides needs to be addressed. Makeshift solutions are not the panacea to prevent farm suicides in future.

Who is the killer?

Farmer suicides is not a new phenomenon. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report of 2015 shows that the number of farmers committing suicide rose more than 41% in 2015 over 2014.

Such a statistic is puzzling and shocking despite innumerable State and Central interventions.

Drought?

- It has been constantly debated if drought is the only factor driving farmers to commit suicide?
- If that had been the case, 1972, 1982 and 1987 were worst drought years, yet no suicides were reported.
- Droughts lead to crop losses which are generally compensated by the government in the concerned year. Hence, drought doesn't literally propel farm suicides.

Debt?

- The NCRB report underlines that indebtedness is the single largest underlying cause behind farmers' suicide.
- Even in 2007, the Radhakrishna Committee on Agricultural Indebtedness appointed by the ministry of finance had underlined that farm indebtedness is the main cause for such an extreme form of distress.
- Hence, it is a matter of concern that policy makers have not taken this area of concern on a serious note even after 10 years since the committee submitted its recommendations
- The belief in policy circles that a loan waiver can solve farm suicides is largely misinformed and misses a concrete base.
- It is because that had one-time relief package been a bailout for debt-ridden farmers, then the massive RS. 71,680 crore Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme announced in May 2008 should have produced the desired results by now.
- However, government data ironically indicates increase in farm suicides after loan waiver!

Non availability of credit?

- It has been reported that non-availability of credit has been causing distress among farmers. For this, a doubling of the agriculture credit scheme was introduced during 2004-05 to increase the flow of credit to farmers.
- However, the Rangarajan Committee on Financial Inclusion (2008) noted that about 66% of marginal farmers still resorted to informal sources of credit.

- Even the report of Task Force on Credit-Related Issues of Farmers (2009) categorically stated that the dominance of moneylenders has continued even after the introduction of doubling of farm credit policy.

These findings suggest that there is something beyond droughts, debt and credit non-availability which is causing farm suicides.

The real culprit

- The rapid pace of **increase in cost of cultivation** of various crops has been a major problem for farmers in the last two decades.
- The Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP) data on cost of cultivation of different crops shows that most of the foodgrain and non-foodgrain crops in the major growing regions of the country have incurred losses from early 1990s onwards.
- The reason is that crop losses that prevailed during the pre-nineties gathered momentum during the post-nineties.
- CACP tells that in nineties, the gross cost required for crops cultivation was almost similar to value of output (VOP) in almost all the major foodgrain and non-foodgrain crops across major growing states.
- This resulted in dwindling of profit margins during the period with no or very little profit for the cultivators. The farmers suicides came to fore only in the late 1990s with the effect of cost escalation showing its fangs.
- Maharashtra has reported maximum number of suicides which is evident from the following
 - Gross cost at current prices escalated massively from Rs. 3,267/ha in 1989-90 to Rs. 61,907/ha in 2011-12.
 - The Profits fluctuated sharply from Rs. 5,585/ha in 1994-95 to (-)Rs. 654/ha in 2011-12.
 - The sugarcane prices have been rising at an alarming rate and ironically, the sugarcane farmers of Maharashtra have not reaped any appreciable profits in relation to its gross cost.
- Though there has been increase in all major input costs, there has been abnormal increase in wage cost in recent years. The reason lies with implementation of MGNREGS which escalated overall cost of cultivation of the crop.
- Andhra Pradesh's paddy crop has not proved to be beneficial to its farmers
 - The profits varied only between Rs. 273/ha to Rs. 170/ha during 1970-71 and 2011-12.
 - Paddy cultivation suffered losses in 19 out of 36 years, compelling AP to declare a 'crop holiday' during kharif 2011.

IASbaba's views- Targeting the cause

It has been understood that income from crop cultivation is neither adequate nor consistent. Hence it is futile to announce one-time relief measures to heal the wound of farmers and also inflict fiscal burden on government.

The policymakers need to focus on the cause (crop losses and increased costs) and not the effect (suicide or indebtedness) for a proper diagnosis.

For this, the skyrocketed prices of farm inputs need to be regulated so that farmers also get a decent profit margin. The cost of cultivation have to be brought down without affecting the productivity of crops. The delivery of agricultural credit needs to be improved and efforts should be undertaken to restructure MGNREGS by linking it with the farming work to reduce the cost of cultivation especially during peak seasons.

As recommended by National Commission on Farmers (2006) and the Working Group on Agriculture Production (2010), MSP for different crops should be at least 50% more than the actual cost of cultivation.

These measures will not arise the need for one-time loan waivers and create a sustainable environment for the farmers' livelihood.

Connecting the dots:

- Recently, SC declared farmers' deaths as a human rights violation issue. Why? What are the causes that cause farm suicides? Examine
- Is there a need for national policy for protecting the farmers, who are the bread winners of the country? What can be its significant provisions in your opinion?

Social Challenges in Housing Schemes

Introduction

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana was launched in 2016 to provide financial assistance for construction of pucca house for all houseless and households living in dilapidated houses. The aim of this scheme is to ensure construction of one crore environmentally safe and secure houses by 2019.

Currently, 32% of the Indian population lives in urban areas and by 2050 more than half the population would be moving to urban areas. However, still a balance needs to be maintained and rural housing has to be kept as an important part of policy making addressing varied needs of the rural residents. The government has to ensure that the housing provided to the rural residents is in sync with the expectation of these residents.

Challenges of Urban Slums

When, as a result of the growing urbanisation, the poor from the villages are required to shift to the cities they continue to stay in the slums but this transition gives rise to various challenges. The challenges are as follows:

- Health concerns in urban areas
- Threats and extortion demands by real estate mafia and the corrupt government officials.
- Urban slums are usually located at prime spots in the urban areas. Hence, they block revenue which the government could have earned from these locations.

Measure for facing Urbanisation

To tackle problems such as those mentioned above and gear up for the increasing pressure due to urbanisation various policy measures have been undertaken.

- United Nations focuses on making cities a better place to live on through Sustainable Development Goal 11 which targets to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- The year 2016 also saw Habitat III summit in Quito, Ecuador promoting a “New Urban Agenda” of giving slum dwellers upgraded housing with basic services by 2030.
- Recently, Government of India also introduced two new interest-subsidy schemes under the PMAY to make housing finance more affordable.

Why PMAY is being rejected?

Tackling urbanisation, providing low cost housing to all with the ‘Housing For All’ target for the year 2022 have been some of the central focus areas for policy by the Indian government. Irrespective of this emphasis still a significant percentage of beneficiaries are not responding positively to the scheme. This segment of the population does not avail benefits provided under the scheme. This also leads to low indicators with respect to success of government schemes and policies and social development of the country.

The reasons for such a situation are:

- Lack of affordable housing finance is a limitation for which the government also introduced the above mentioned interest subsidy schemes.
- Stakeholder participation at the time of policy making is very low and as a result they feel unsatisfied with the provisions in the schemes.
- Inefficient subsidy targeting also leads to vacancies in the housing schemes because the subsidy fails to accurately address the problem of affordability.
- The housing schemes involve relocation of the people. As a result of the relocation, they tend to get disconnected from their social ties and relations.

Social Disconnect

Among the reasons mentioned above, it is observed from studies that the feel of disconnect and loss of social connections is a major reason for the beneficiaries to reject the housing provided by the government.

Psychological Support

The relocation under housing schemes leads to a feeling of isolation. Social relations and community provides them a sense of support and comfort for the troubled days. Those residing in slums seek and provide a lot of psychological and material support from each other which the State cannot provide.

Financial Comfort

Slum dwellers rely on each other for their borrowing needs in a regular manner. Moving to new areas also impacts their earning capacity and labour force participation.

Socio-Economic Development

There is a greater need to understand what the individuals moving to a new place will gain or lose and what will be their response to the shift. This is because it is mentioned as a result of studies that benefits give the best results only if the people are made to relocate at an early age. Hence, a targeted approach is very important.

Way Forward

Steps that can be taken to address the above issues are:

- The government policies should be designed in a manner which helps the people to preserve their social networks even after relocation. The government could try to move the entire community to new areas.
- The policy makers should not keep relocation central to the policy. Focus should be given to the rights of slum dwellers and ensuring their rights are addressed. Schemes and policies should try to collect data on the preferences of poor migrants so that need based approach can be followed.
- More investment is needed in social capital rather than financial capital in the form of interest-rate subsidies.
- The government can try to provide residences on the periphery of the cities to the poor from rural slums.

Connecting the dots

- Government schemes do not only face implementation or structural challenges but are also subject to social challenges. Discuss. Suggest a strategy for overcoming social challenges in policy making and implementation.

Time to sustain renewed focus on Maternal and Child care

- In an unexpected twist, PM made the pregnant women of India a surprise beneficiary of post demonetisation sops, thereby taking steps towards championing the cause of maternal and child health (MCH) in India.
- The PM committed his government to implement the long-promised maternity entitlement commitment in NFSA by extending Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, a 53 district pilot to a national scheme.

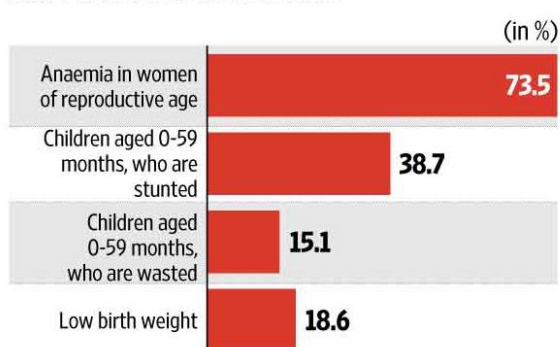
Maternal Benefit Programme

Not confident precedence

- In last three years, the government's track record on delivery in maternal and child health has been poor despite a dedicated section on maternal and child health in 2016 Economic Survey as well as NFSA's provision for maternal and child health.
- Budget for nutrition flagship programme ICDS was decreased from Rs. 16,312 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 14,000 crore in 2016-17. Even IGMSY had few resources, with allocation of Rs. 1294 crores between 2013-14 and 2016-17 and releasing only 63% of the allocated funds.
- Repeated calls have been given to address the challenges pertaining to implementation deficits, but hardly have they been addressed.
- However, a renewed focus on MCH is much needed with growing deficits in nutritional outcomes and high maternal and infant mortality rates in India.

From targeted to universal scheme

Where does India stand on maternal and child nutrition indicators?



National averages for anaemia were derived by International Food Policy Research Institute using a weighted mean of women aged 18-49 years pooling data from District level Household and Facility Survey 4 (2013) and Clinical, Anthropometric & Bio-chemical (2014) and Census (2011) for population.

Low birth weight is with birth weight less than 2,500 grams (out of those weighed); stunted is (height for age below 2 standard deviation) and wasted is weight for height below 2 standard deviation)

Source: Rapid Survey on Children (2014) for stunted, wasted and low birth weight.

Picture Credit:

http://www.livemint.com/r/LiveMint/Period2/2017/01/25/Photos/Processed/w_MCH_Data.jpg

- India's maternal and infant mortality indicators are very poor. Every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. Thus, an undernourished woman would likely give birth to a low-weight baby.
- **Maternal mortality ratio:** 174 deaths/100000 live births and **Infant mortality ratio:** 40 deaths/ 1000 live births
- As per the UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, India recorded the highest number of maternal deaths in 2013 and accounted for 17% of global deaths due to pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications. In India, less than 40% of births in India are institutional deliveries.
- While women employed in the formal sector are entitled to maternity benefits like paid leave by their employers for 26 weeks (under Maternity Benefit Amendment Bill of 2016), such benefits are absent for women in the unorganised sector, which employs 90% of women.
- Hence, it was required that the government now universally implement Section 4 (b) of the National Food Security Act which states that every pregnant and lactating mother would be entitled to maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000.

Will MBP deliver?

- MBP is a conditional cash transfer with money being given to beneficiaries in **three instalments** upon fulfilling conditions- antenatal checkups, institutional delivery and child vaccinations.
- The cash incentive of Rs.6000 is payable to pregnant and lactating women as **compensation for the wage loss so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery.**
- The aim is to improve her health and nutrition during the period of pregnancy and lactation and to breastfeed the child during the first six months of the birth, which is very vital for the development of the child.
- Resultantly, it is expected that it will reduce mother mortality rate, IMR, under-nutrition and its adverse effects.

Looming challenges**Count of beneficiaries**

- The anticipated beneficiaries under MBP are to be 5.17 million annually. However, the government data suggests that 7.5 million women received Janani Suraksha Yojna (JSY) benefits in 2015-16 and the ICDS supplementary nutrition programme beneficiaries is estimated to be 19.33 million.

- This means that existing + potential beneficiaries are higher than current calculation. In absence of clarity on 5.17 million numbers, the programme may have large exclusion errors.
- This might once again lead to spending of huge finances without reaping expected outcomes.

Conditions

- IGMSY pilot gave important lessons in this respect. The conditionalities imposed might lead to exclusion of the truly vulnerable. This is because health services which fulfil certain conditions are not easily available in many parts of the country.
- Most maternity benefits schemes are targeted on the basis of income, age and number of children showing their patriarchal values.
- The findings related to repeated pregnancies suggest that women from the extremely marginalised groups are the ones who will get excluded from the scheme due to its eligibility condition, thereby deteriorating their health further in absence of counselling or information on family planning.
- A study by National Alliance for Maternal Health and Human Rights has shown that precondition such as eligibility excludes 60% of women in the 15-49 age group, most of whom are Dalits and tribals. They are the ones who have more than two children, are illiterate and devoid of financial inclusion.
- Conditions such as immunization, counselling session, ANCs and PNCs have a positive impact, but cash transfer on their strict adherence excludes the beneficiaries who are not able to fulfil them.
- Rapid Survey on Children, 2014 highlights that **less than half** of pregnant women receive more than four antenatal care assessments or receive supplementary food during pregnancy, and **less than a fourth** report consuming iron-folic acid tablets.
- When these women are not given the cash transfer as expected, they are not encouraged for institutional deliveries. A 2016 study highlighted that fund flows to beneficiary bank accounts were slow because of complicated paperwork associated with fulfilling the conditionalities.
- Conditionalities related to utilising health and nutrition services are also meaningless in the absence of a service guarantee and the difficulties in accessing these schemes in the first place, as seen in most of the villages.
- Thus, the beneficiaries are more likely to be denied benefits due to government conditions rather than their own behavioural choices.

Financial hurdle

- The current programme is estimated to cost the government Rs. 16,000 crore a year, compared with the current estimate of Rs. 3,165 crore and entire WCD ministry allocation in budget 2016-17 of Rs. 17,408 crore.
- Also, change cannot be expected in the absence of significant changes in the incentives of health workers. While institutional deliveries have risen, partly driven by the JSY cash

transfer programme, it has not resulted in a significant impact on neo-natal mortality rates.

- Thus, the burden of finances may water down the intended outcomes.

Administrative challenges

- Along with financial concern, it is imperative for administrative reforms to take place.
- Most of the conditionalities associated with the MBP are linked to programmes and schemes run by the health ministry. But MBP shall be under Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Thus, presence of multiple ministries with different accountability systems will create roadblocks for the successful programme implementation.
- Administrative rigidities such as insisting on registration at the anganwadi centres (even if the woman was registered with the health department) and not including women in their natal homes add to the barriers in access to the scheme.

Implementation

- The Centre failed to implement universal maternity benefits as mandated by the NFSA for a long time.
- Only Tamil Nadu is prominently known to implement this scheme as '**Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme**' where cash assistance of Rs. 12,000 is given in 3 instalments on conditional release and restricted for first two deliveries only.
- As per Registrar General of India, Tamil Nadu has the second lowest infant mortality rate (20 per 1,000 live births) among all states in India, only behind Kerala (12).
- In Odisha, the **Mamata scheme** is a universal maternity entitlement providing Rs 5,000 to all mothers. A found that although coverage was not universal, it was reasonably high.
- Hence, proper implementation along with regular monitoring is the key to success in decreasing maternal and child mortality rates as well as improving health status of India.

Conclusion

Nutrition constitutes the foundation for human development and becomes more important during the period of pregnancy and lactation coupled with wage loss.

If the government wants to prove that it is committed to the cause of providing optimal nutritional status, especially to the most vulnerable communities, it has to implement the programme effectively. India's DPSP recognises the need for maternity benefits in

- Article 39 (e)- "The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing – that the health and strength of workers, men, women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter a vocation unsuited to their age or strength."
- Article 42 - "The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief."

The introduction of maternity entitlements in the National Food Security Act (NFSA) has been hailed as a recognition by the State that all women are workers. Apart from wage loss

compensation, maternity entitlements are recognised as a medium to promote exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months. The conditional cash transfer scheme is to improve health behaviours, address the rights of all women as workers to have sufficient time for rest, recovery and child care during maternity. MBP is expected to deliver on these expectation.

Connecting the dots:

- What is Maternity Benefit Programme? Critically analyse its implementation model based on a previous model it has been formulated.

The Long Walk to Universal Rural Electrification

Introduction

Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) has been subsumed into Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana which is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Power aiming to facilitate 24x7 supply of power. The new scheme intends to initiate reforms in the rural areas to provide for universal electrification.

The main focus areas of the scheme are:

- Feeder separation for rural households & agricultural use.
- Providing round the clock power to rural households and adequate power to agricultural consumers
- Strengthening of sub-transmission & distribution infrastructure including metering at all levels in rural areas.

What is Electrification?

Before we analyse the performance of the rural electrification targets, it is important to understand the exact definition of electrification of villages. As per the scheme, following are the criteria that have to be fulfilled to be considered as electrified:

- Basic infrastructure such as distribution transformer and distribution lines are provided in the inhabited locality as well as the dalit basti/hamlet where it exists.
- Electricity is provided to public places such as schools, panchayat office, health centres, dispensaries, community centres, etc.
- The number of households electrified is at least 10 per cent of the total number of households in the village.

Performance Appraisal

The aim of 100% rural electrification received a lot of emphasis in last year's Budget and it was promised that the goal would be achieved by March 2017. In terms of numbers the government seems to be very close to achieving the goal but still there is a lot of more distance to cover.

Whether this is actual electrification?

As per statistics 99% of the villages have been electrified because electricity lines have been provided in those villages. Questions regarding the access, affordability and consistency with which the electricity is supplied to the villages are still there. There might be a situation where the infrastructure has been set up but has been lying unrepaired for years following certain damages. At times villages might be receiving power supply for two to three hours a day but are considered as electrified. This does not show a true and fair picture.

Does electrification lead to intensification?

Intensification refers to the process when the government tries to ensure that all households within the village also have access to power supply. The percentage of intensification is significantly lower as compared to electrification of villages. According to surveys only 72% of the total households in India receive electricity and more than 40% of the rural households do not get electricity.

Regional Variations

Large amount of regional variations also exist in terms of rural electrification. States such as Bihar and Assam are lagging behind in a big way. Satellite imagery has also been used and shows that ground reality is quite different and unfortunate.

Conclusion

As a result of the above analysis it is understood that having access to electricity or an electricity connection is just not enough. Affordability and reliability of the electricity supply are major concerns. It is due to these two aspects that rural areas are facing a significant electrification deficit. Therefore, even though villages are fulfilling the definition of being electrified it is important to take care of the following important aspects.

- Quality of the connection,
- Reliability of the power supply,
- Duration of the supply, and
- Repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

Connecting the dots

- What are the provisions of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana? Analyse the performance of the scheme vis-a-vis the reality that the villages of India faces. Suggest measures to ensure increased intensification of electricity and access.

INTERNATIONAL

TOPIC: General Studies 2

- *India and its neighbourhood- relations.*
- *Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.*

India Bangladesh Relationship

Introduction

India was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate and independent state and established diplomatic relations with the country immediately after its independence in December 1971. India had played a very huge role in Bangladesh's freedom struggle. India's links with Bangladesh are civilisational, cultural, social and economic. There is so much that unites the two countries such as a shared history, common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts. India and Bangladesh's geographical locations complement each other and present an opportunity for both to further develop their connectivity links and economies.

Complimentary Relationship

India and Bangladesh have a lot to gain from each other considering the location of both the nations. India is one of the two neighbours having border with Bangladesh and is a major power in South Asia which can support Bangladesh militarily and economically. India also played a very important role in the freedom struggle of Bangladesh when it had its own set of challenges in terms of economy and refugees.

Bangladesh, on the other hand is one of the six neighbours having borders with India. Its location is highly critical because it is almost enveloped within India. The two nations are intricately linked in terms of geography. In spite of these factors, both the nations have failed to seize the opportunity and develop extremely cordial and strong bilateral relations. One major reason for the same is the 'business as usual' approach by India.

Major Challenges – Transit and Access

The resolution of transit related issue has seen very slow progress due to lack of effective strategy and investments. India has been seeking access and comprehensive multi modal transit policy for long but both the nations have only managed piecemeal deals with no global vision. In both the nations, different ministries are involved for different systems of transport. This has led to involvement of too many ministries, thus leading to bureaucratic delays and divergence of approach of different ministries.

What was needed in this case was a masterplan, with one vision and clear goals of improving trade, commerce and connectivity in all sub-regional, regional, trans-Asian and trans-continental aspects.

Water Sharing Disputes

Water sharing has also been a long and unending dispute between both the nations. It has proved to be a major challenge because of the following reasons:

- In this case too, there has been no change in approach over the years.
- The problems between the central government and the West Bengal state government.
- Absence of a comprehensive strategy which will deal with all the rivers together and provide for a common policy rather than individual management of rivers.

Other Challenges

- The Farakka barrage dispute has been a major reason for giving rise to the anti-Indianism prevailing. The barrage is said to have a devastating impact on the ecosystem of northwest Bangladesh, destroying land, increasing salinity in river and underground water.
- Rampal Power plant being set up near the Sunderbans has raised concerns regarding environment degradation and unfortunately all voices raised against this have not been given due respect.
- A few undesirable non tariff barriers continue to exist and prove to be a hindrance in the trade between both the nations.

Bright Spots in the Relationship

There have been positive developments as well which are as follows:

- The biggest step forward required from Bangladesh was responding to India's security concern and removing all terrorist camps within its borders.
- India has allowed duty-free access to Bangladeshi goods.
- India is also selling to Bangladesh which has had a major impact. This is one area where a lot more needs to be done and the performance is below potential.
- The signing of the 30-year Ganges Water Treaty in 1996 has led to mitigation of some of the negative impact arising due to Farakka Barrage dispute.

Way Forward

As mentioned, the relationship has a huge potential if the energies are channelized in the right direction. A few things that need to be given special attention are:

- Substantial progress in our bilateral relations can be achieved with proper policy and planning.

- The media, especially in India, needs to bring critical matters into limelight and give them due attention. A lot of issues do not receive the adequate attention because of indifference on the part of the media.
- Failure to negotiate over the Teesta river dispute has been a major shortcoming on the part of both the nations.

Connecting the dots

- Describe the major challenges that need to be addressed to improve the relationship between India and Bangladesh. Suggest what steps can the two nations can take to address the challenges?

India Africa Relationship – Kenya Focus

Introduction

India has worked hard on maintaining a cordial relationship with Africa and its nations. Both the previous and the present government have done sufficiently well in this regard. The present government boasts of holding the India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015 and political outreach to Africa through visits by the President, Vice-President and Prime Minister to numerous countries in 2016.

Kenya is one of India's most important African partners and is currently a participant at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit. The leader of Kenya reciprocating a visit by the Indian counterparts sends out positive signals and creates a lot of hope as well.

India and the East Africa

The East African Community (EAC) comprises of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. It has emerged as a very efficient Regional Economic Community with China as the major source of investment. It is now building a single market and wants to set up a monetary union.

- Indian government and corporates need a well drafted trade and industrial cooperation strategy to upgrade existing links with the EAC.
- India has to balance its relationship with nations such as Tanzania and Kenya who are traditional rivals. Kenya has now established closer ties with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi as "the coalition of the willing".
- India enjoys friendly and cooperative relations with all EAC members. It should make the best of this cordial relationship and ensure it can get maximum benefits from this opportunity.

Potential of India Kenya Partnership

- India and Kenya may give a push to deepening bilateral ties with focus on strengthening economic cooperation and bilateral trade. Indian companies should try to be active in this competitive market.
- Kenya has been an important destination for Indian investments. More viable sectors such as energy, pharmaceuticals, textiles, agriculture and financial services provide a higher potential.
- Major Indian corporates such as Tatas, Reliance, Essar, Kirloskars and Dr. Reddy's, are already flourishing in Kenya.
- Indian government must approve additional Line of Credit in strategic areas such as education and health to secure mutual interests.

India's Future Policy

India and African nations such as Kenya have a common agenda of counterterrorism and peace in the respective backyards. With a lot of mutual admiration to guide the relationship India should consider incorporating the following in its policy towards African nations:

- With a lot of uncertainty regarding the policy of USA, India should ensure that it gives adequate attention towards this region and play the role of a world leader.
- India needs to adopt a patient approach because issues such as UN reform, counterterrorism, climate change and international solar alliance will take long to show results.
- India must concentrate on actions that strengthen its economic cooperation with select African countries.
- India has to tackle competition among Asian nations for getting close to Kenya. Kenya has developed close relations with China under its Look East Policy.
- Japan and India could partner in key infrastructure development projects in Kenya and the surrounding regions with innovative models.
- The next summit with Africa has been scheduled to 2020 instead of 2018. This could hamper the progress of this relationship. Hence, India should consider ministerial review meetings in 2018 and build upon this relationship. Nairobi, with its excellent location and conference facilities, could be an ideal choice and Mr. Kenyatta a willing partner.

Connecting the dots

- India and African nations have a history of cordial relations. Discuss the potential of partnership between India and various African countries. Also throw light on the challenges that India could face in strengthening this partnership.

Review of India's Asian Strategy

Introduction

Nations which have an important role to play in shaping international relations have restructured their foreign policies, both with respect to defence and economy, as per the needs of the evolving geopolitics. Countries such as the U.S., China and Russia have responded well to this evolution but India still does not have a clear strategy with which it can take advantage of the basket of opportunities arising in Asia.

Indian Evolution

Almost three centuries ago India was the richest country dominating the world economy with textile exports. However, lapses in our policies and certain decisions in those years allowed the British to rule upon us. As a result of the colonisation, India was exploited for the benefit of countries progressing as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

As a result of the above, India has never been able to secure a similar global standing as it did three centuries ago. Chinese economy is now five times that of India and soon to be the largest in the world. India has all the capabilities and the demography to overtake China by 2050. However, the same can be achieved with sound policies, national and international, and channelizing the resources in the best way in the right direction.

India's Challenges

- India's 'Look East Policy' has not helped India with material gains other than agreements including the sale of coastal patrolling vessel to Vietnam.
- On the west, India is parking high stakes in the Chabahar port. However, India suffers a major constraint in terms finances when compared to China.
- Even though India has made huge investments in Afghanistan, still global groupings have kept India out of the political discussions in Afghanistan.
- In South Asia, Bhutan is probably the only nation which is exclusively under India's sphere of influence.
- NITI Aayog has not developed any roadmap for India to become a \$10- trillion economy by 2032.
- India is also lacking a clear national viewpoint on the uncertainties, challenges and opportunities in terms of technological innovation reshaping global politics, economy and society.
- There has been an excessive and constant emphasis on the military strategies in dealing with other countries and blaming Pakistan for terrorism. This energy needs to be devoted towards trade and economic strategies.
- India is also isolated with respect to its approach towards the OBOR. India is the only nation in continental Asia which has not agreed to be a part of the OBOR.

Emergence of China

- The re-emergence of China has limited the ability of the U.S. in setting the global agenda and preventing the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank by asking Europe to keep out.
- China is making huge investment in infrastructure creation as seen in the case of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The amount of resources China is devoting has led to almost nations in continental Asia agreeing to be a part of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.
- Chinese investment has also attracted nations such as Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar.
- Russia and Central Asian nations are also linking their infrastructure development to the OBOR thus getting the much needed access to warm water ports.
- China is focussing on connectivity, the OBOR, infrastructure, new institutions and integrated markets. The massive investment has given a vision of shared prosperity.

Changes in USA Policy

- In the post World War 2 era, U.S. dominated global geopolitics on three rules with coercive power:
 - Global trade with dispute settlement;
 - Global security system resting on alliances; and
 - Deliberations in the United Nations based on a division between donors and recipients.
- USA has now realised the need for change in policy from confrontation to creation of spheres of influence. The chances of confrontation with respect to economy and trade are very less now. There is a greater need for integration of economies.
- US, Russia and China relations are expected to get better since digital flows are now adding more wealth to the global economy.
- The upcoming president in USA also recognises the need for building military superiority based on technological leadership. As a result, it is expected to recognise the growth and leadership potential of China.
- With the focus on spheres of influence, USA has also brought about changes in its policy. It has recognised India as a major defence partner and also provided Pakistan with nearly \$1 billion in military assistance on conditional basis.

Action Steps for India

- India needs to focus on GDP growth and economic development rather than other challenges such as NSG membership and Pakistan. These problems will be resolved with economic progress.
- India should also cooperate rather than confront and integrate with the OBOR initiative.
- India should add a 'Digital Sustainable Asia' component to OBOR. This is one area where India's leadership potential can be tapped. OBOR should also be seen as a chance to strengthen democracy.

- India has to balance cross-border terrorism with cross-border water flows and focus on greater reliance on endogenous cyber security and missiles.

Connecting the dots

- India has failed to make the best of the advantages it enjoyed over the past few decades. Discuss the reasons for India's failure in capitalising on its own potential. Also discuss a strategy in terms of Asian geopolitics that India needs to adopt to become a regional leader.

India UAE Relations

Introduction

Over the years India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) have forged a very strong friendship based on cultural, religious and economic ties. The friendship between the two flourished under the rule of H.H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan as the Ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and then later with the creation of the UAE Federation in 1971. Both the countries have constantly made efforts to take the relationship to new heights constantly.

The relationship, in contemporary times, is further set for a boost. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited UAE in 2015 and was the first Indian PM in 34 years to visit UAE. The crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan will be this chief guest at India's Republic Day Parade this year and the present government has always used this platform to send important policy signals.

Areas of Cooperation

Trade and Commerce

- UAE is the third largest trade partner of India next only to China and the USA and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries together are India's second largest trade partners.
- India's energy needs are primarily satisfied through the UAE and other Gulf nations. The GCC is the source of 45% of India's petroleum and UAE is one of the biggest sources of oil imports into India.
- UAE's Sovereign Wealth Fund is the future source of huge investments for India.
- UAE-India Infrastructure Investment Fund is also expected to see progress this time as a Memorandum of Agreement for the Fund will be signed between the two nations without further delay.

Defence and Strategy

- India UAE have signed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement this week which paves the way for joint defence production and more defence procurement deals between the two countries.
- Due to the importance of Strait of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb, Indian Navy has regularly paid visits to important port locations for ensuring security measures are in place.
- India and UAE have also carried out naval exercises in this region and Indian warships have been placed for tracking piracy and carrying out anti piracy operations.
- To promote regional security, cooperation for reconstruction and the peace process in Afghanistan is an important areas for both the countries to be on the same page.

Human Resource and Indian Diaspora

- India has the highest percentage of diaspora in the Gulf nations including UAE and more than 50% of India's remittances are received from this region. Therefore, for cordial relations it is very important for UAE to ensure proper living conditions for these workers.
- India has also launched an eMigrate System to provide for recruitment of Indian workers in UAE and other countries.
- UAE is highly interested in India's human resource for sectors such as information technology, construction and transportation. Hence, the two nations are looking to sign labour agreements to ensure employment and good working conditions.

Terrorism

Both UAE and India are located critically in terms of proximity to terrorism affected areas. As a result both have agreed to partner on opposition to terrorism. It is important for the two nations to partner in calling other states to abandon terrorism, destroy all forms of infrastructure that supports terrorism and ensure that terrorists and stakeholders are punished adequately.

With the Islamic State (IS) growing on one side and Pakistan located in close proximity on the other, the Gulf nations including UAE face a dual danger in terms of terrorism. Even though Pakistan has been a close ally of the UAE, there has been a constant inclination towards improving relations with India for regional security.

Conclusion

The constantly evolving geopolitics globally, with China's rise and emergence of Islamic State, has made it important for India to focus on this partnership. This partnership has a unique 360 degrees relevance. The two countries are important to each other for economic, defence, strategic, people to people ties and energy security. With the falling oil prices, India also provides UAE an alternative opportunity for making investments. UAE has to

ensure that it safeguards the interests of the strong Indian diaspora. These measures will go a long way in sustainability of this unique partnership.

Connecting the dots

- UAE is not only important for India's energy security but holds a comprehensive 360 degrees relevance. Highlight the areas of cooperation between the two nations and how will India benefit from this relationship.

Growing Chinese Presence in South Asia

Introduction

Growing Chinese influence in South Asia has been very evident in the past few years. When Sri Lanka decided to develop the Hambantota port and areas around it, the Sri Lankan government was not very keen on taking assistance from India or the Western nations. During this time, China grabbed the opportunity and initiated major investments in the region.

Similarly, Gwadar Port in Pakistan is another hub for Chinese investment and for the military to have base and access to the connected regions. China's interest in both these regions has raised quite a few questions in the mind of India and political thinkers about its impact on India.

China and Sri Lanka

Chinese presence in Hambantota is a result of the Indian inclination towards developing Colombo port and China's financial strength which made its investments in Hambantota more viable. China has also acquired naval facilities in Hambantota to show its military might.

Why Hambantota has been a domestic failure?

Other than the port construction, China's Exim Bank offered loans for projects such as a southern highway, a tele-cinema park and an airport of which all the projects ended up as financial failures. The reasons for this are:

- As compared to Hambantota, Colombo is a natural port and a better location from where goods are exported to and imported from India.
- Hambantota has very limited share of imports entering Sri Lanka.
- Similarly, no international flights are using the Hambantota Airport even though free landing facilities have been offered.
- Financial liabilities far outweigh the revenue.

Opportunities for China

As a result of the above situation where the domestic financial viability of development of Hambantota has been very poor, China has been able to get access to lot of opportunities which are as follows:

- Ownership of Norochcholai power plant has been transferred to China, under a debt swap agreement, due to no repayment of debts incurred on its construction.
- Due to overflowing debt and increasing liabilities, Sri Lanka has sold 80% of the Hambantota port to China.
- Sri Lanka has also offered an investment zone to China in the same region.
- As a result of this entire scenario, China will now manufacture in Sri Lanka and export to India making best use of the advantages arising due to the free trade agreement between Sri Lanka and India.

China in Gwadar and related Concerns

- Just like Hambantota is set to become an essential element of China's Maritime Silk Route, China intends to use Gwadar to develop on the China-Pakistan partnership and strengthen maritime control over the sea-lanes used for oil/gas supplies from West Asia.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being developed by China in Pakistan. It connects China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar through Gilgit-Baltistan. This region is a part of the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir which is actually a part of India's territory.
- The CPEC is being developed with much more favourable financial conditions for Pakistan and lacks transparency as well.

Challenges for China

- Lack of clarity regarding the intended beneficiaries of CPEC. Baluchistan is against the project because of people of the region are getting no benefits out of the project.
- Baluchistan is also unhappy with the returns that they will receive from the investment by China in Saindak copper and gold mining projects.
- Fear of outsiders coming into the province and putting immense pressure on the resources is also prevalent as a result of the CPEC and the development of Gwadar port.

India's Concern

- Chinese activities in Hambantota are of both strategic and economic interest to India.
- India has to be vocal about the fact that it does not accept China's growing control in the region and the use of Hambantota for parking Chinese warships and submarines.
- Combined control and influence over Gwadar and Hambantota will give China the chance to interdict vital oil supplies.
- Increasing militarisation by China and threats to militarily equip India's neighbours is a major concern.

- China and Pakistan together will be able to get easy access to the Gulf of Hormuz. This will create obstacles in smooth movement of energy resources from West Asia to India and put questions on energy security as well.

Connecting the dots

- Throw light on China's growing presence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Discuss its impact on the geopolitics of the region. Also suggest what should be India's approach towards these developments justifying your stand with reasons.

'Think West' is gaining momentum

- 'Think West' is India's policy outreach towards the Gulf which suggests new push towards more concrete strategic policies for West Asia.
- The eastern front is building upon longstanding policy of 'Act East', whereas the western one is relatively more recent conceptually, even if India has had a historical presence in the Gulf.
- The Indian diaspora in the west is now a strong community of 7 million which is an impressive source of investment and remittances. However, India's relations with the west have been more of evolutionary.
- Earlier, the relations were based mainly on energy and labour but now the new interplay among the Gulf nations offer new avenues of cooperation.
- The 'Think West' approach is also a timely one with changing world geopolitics. The top oil exporting countries are now looking east to develop and increase its oil market as the growth in Western economies slows and the U.S. has become energy self-sufficient due to shale revolution.
- Thus, the markets with the greatest demand for Middle East's oil lie in Asia, predominantly led by the likes of China, India, Japan and South Korea.

The under-appreciated foreign policy

- India has had long historical ties with the gulf countries, yet in last few decades, the energy imports and labour exports only defined the links between India and the region.
- However, the government was committed to match India's landmark "Act East" policy with 'Think West'.
- India and Gulf countries share impressive trade relations. With UAE only, India has reached \$50 billion mark. This economic relation is further boosted by remittances sent by Indian labour migrants in the Gulf region.

UAE

- PM's visit to UAE in August 2015 was a first by an Indian prime minister in 34 years. This was reciprocated by UAE's crown prince when he visited India in Feb 2016 and once

again as Republic Day Chief Guest in 2017. This underlines the quick progress being established between both countries.

- The efforts are now being made to build “a **comprehensive strategic partnership**”. In 2015, UAE pledged to invest \$75 billion in India which is slowly picking up the momentum after the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund was established.
- A joint statement by India and UAE notes the desire of the two countries “to transform the buyer-seller relationship in the energy sector to one of deeper partnership focusing on **investment and joint ventures in petrochemical complexes**, and cooperation in joint exploration in India, the UAE and in third countries”.

Saudi Arabia

- India-Saudi relationship has historically been cordial, based on mutual needs and transactional interests. There are around 2.5 million Indians in Saudi Arabia. India also imports significant share of its oil imports from Saudi Arabia.
- Two pivotal diplomatic events taken place between both countries in the last decade have been
 - Delhi declaration (2006)
 - Riyadh declaration (2010)
- King of Saudi Arabia became first head of the House of Saud to visit India in 51 years in 2006. The visit laid the **ground for greater security, intelligence sharing and counterterrorism cooperation**.
- The new era of relations paid dividends with the deportation of terrorists wanted in India from Saudi Arabia. The inclusion of security and counterterrorism element is significant for bilateral ties as Saudi Arabia can exert pressure over Pakistan.
- Indian Air Force also made a staging visit to Saudi Arabia in 2016 while on route to military exercises in the United Kingdom. This stopover is highly symbolic for India-Saudi ties in the security sphere.

Iran

- India and Iran are close **economic and strategic partners**. Despite tight sanctions due to Iran’s nuclear weapons program, India never ceased its bilateral links with Iran and pursued discussions on transport networks.
- In 2016, India and Iran signed the historic **Chabahar deal** where it commits substantial Indian investment to develop the all-weather, deep-sea port for Iran. This agreement shall significantly boost the role of the under-tapped port of Chabahar connecting Iran through India and Afghanistan to central Asia.
- The Chabahar port would **facilitate the trade of goods** from Iran into South Asia with the Chabahar Free Trade Zone in place. India-Iran bilateral trade has zoomed past \$14 billion.
- Iran is an important source of oil and gas for India. Several Indian companies are investing in crude oil exploration and continued to procure it from Iran when American

and EU sanctions existed and significant restrictions were levied on trade with Iran. With sanctions being lifted, the scope and potential of relations shall be increased.

Israel

- Israel has emerged to be one of India's important partners with cordial political relations and significant economic cooperation.
- Trade between two countries is around \$5.5 billion and further cooperation and opportunities are being established and explored in field of IT, solar energy, dairy development, **water management**, horticulture, **animal husbandry and agriculture**.
- The key area of cooperation has been **defence and security** along with critical areas of interaction like counter terrorism and extremism, cyber security, among others.
- President of India visited Israel in 2016 which will be followed by PM in 2017. This marks the growing India-Israel relationship which goes beyond India's relations with Arab countries of the region.

The shift is evolutionary

- There are various structural factors at play for increased relations between India and Gulf region
 - US's cut on its role wrt to global security is timed with India's aspiration to play a greater role in the Indian Ocean.
 - The rise of religious radicalism globally and India's ability to largely escape it has underlined the success of India's multicultural social fabric.
 - In times of financial instabilities, India has stood strong with high growth numbers.
- Also, there has been change in attitude of gulf countries towards India. In 1969, India was forced to stay out of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Pakistan's insistence. However, countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar showed solidarity with India after the Pakistan-sponsored terror attack in Uri.
- Even the killings of UAE diplomats in Afghanistan has changed the ground situations between India and UAE as during the days of Taliban rule, Indian and UAE were in opposition. Thus, India has been able to carve its place in gulf region as a friend and a partner.
- However, this transformation is not immediate. It began with PM Narsimha Rao who became close to Israel and shattered the myth that India cannot open up to Israel without harming its relationship with Islamic countries in West Asia.
- The NDA government invited President of Iran as Republic Day Chief Guest in 2003 and that is when idea of developing Chabahar port was born.
- The two declarations, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia's visit as Republic Day chief guest in 2006 are stepping stones in increased relation of India with west.

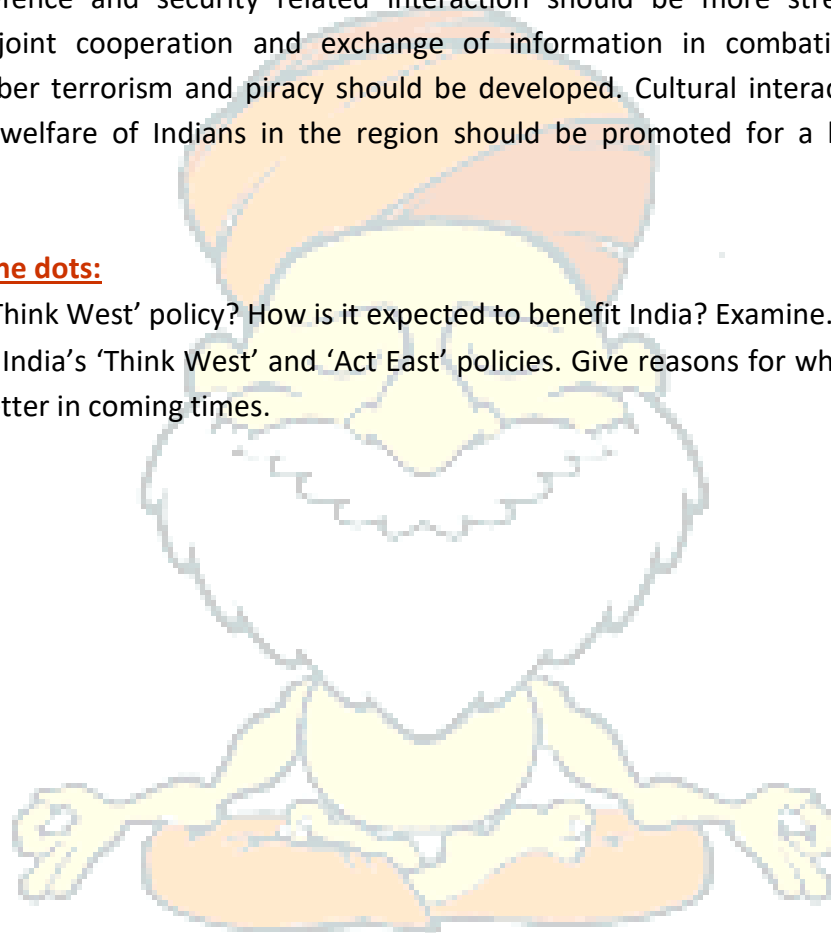
IASbaba's views

India has to follow a balanced approach with all the critical partner countries in the Gulf region. Due to increased sectarian clashes and terrorist attacks, the region bears the risk of becoming consistently unstable. Also, India should tread cautiously while dealing with various countries individually as many of them have internal rivalries. Given regional differences and inter-power play issues, India should ensure that it is not seen to be taking sides or biased in the interactions.

From political perspectives, high level visits should continue to maintain the strategic dialogue with the gulf countries. India along with principal Asian economies like China, Japan, and Republic of Korea should play a catalytic role in making the region secure. Economic and commercial cooperation should be boosted with increased investments mutually. Defence and security related interaction should be more strengthened and agenda for joint cooperation and exchange of information in combating extremism, terrorism, cyber terrorism and piracy should be developed. Cultural interactions between nations and welfare of Indians in the region should be promoted for a better regional stability.

Connecting the dots:

- What is 'Think West' policy? How is it expected to benefit India? Examine.
- Compare India's 'Think West' and 'Act East' policies. Give reasons for which is expected to fare better in coming times.



ECONOMY

The slowing economy

No doubt, India's growth momentum has slowed down as advanced GDP estimates and gross value added (GVA) for the current fiscal year from the Central Statistics Office clearly revealed the extent of the slowdown.

Statistical data

- The GDP growth is now pegged at 7.1%, as compared to 7.6% in 2015-16.
- The GVA is forecasted to expand at 7.2% in 2016-17 as compared to 7.2% last year.
- From the key areas of economy:
 - Mining and quarrying is estimated to shrink 1.8% in 2016-17 after expanding 7.4% last year.
 - Utility services like electricity, gas, water supply and others — collectively an indicator of broader economic activity — is slowing to 6.5% from 6.6%.
 - Manufacturing and services, the two key engines of economy, are losing momentum, faster than anticipated.
 - The growth projections for services such as financial, insurance and real estate is at 9% compared to last year's 10.3%. Other services such as trade and telecommunication will grow 6% as against 9% last year.
 - Manufacturing will grow 7.4% versus 9.3% previous fiscal.
 - Construction - the biggest creator of jobs – will grow at 2.9% against 3.9% last year.
- It is the lowest growth forecast in three years.
- However, there is some hope as the data predicts that 'normal monsoon' shall expand 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' sector at 4.1% this fiscal compared with the previous period's 1.2%.
- FM had projected in April that growth could accelerate this year to 8-8.5% subject to normal monsoon. It stemmed from the reversal in downturn trend wherein
 - Excise duties jumped 46% as against the target of 12%
 - Corporation tax was up by 21% as against budgeted 9%.
 - Service tax was high by 27% against the conservative target of 10%.
- The projections have been made based on data from April to October only and don't take into account the post-demonetisation impact.

Why only till October?

- The policy of demonetisation brought lot of volatility in the figures in that time period, especially in sectors of financial, insurance, real estate and professional services.

- Hence, it was better to not factor in the post demonetisation growth period which saw mostly predictions and not actual ground level data.
- For example, there has been growth in VAT collections in November 2016 in many states. Counting in on such extreme data may not provide a true picture.
- Also, the budget is going to be presented earlier, hence, there was a need to bring in early the GDP growth data forecast.

Reasons for slowdown

- The slump is mainly due to slowdown in manufacturing, mining and construction sectors where the manufacturing sector has been under-performing for nearly two years now.
- There has been sluggish environment of investments, especially private investments.
- Shortfall in revenue from disinvestments as only Rs. 23,529 crore were raised against expectation of Rs. 56500 crore.
- The farm output was low due to past two drought years.
- Higher subsidy expenditure on food, petroleum and fertiliser, right from the beginning of fiscal year.
- Additionally, the global economy is also facing a slowdown and India is not insulated from its effects.

Forecast spectrum

- Preliminary rabi data show that the total area sown under the rabi crop as on January 6 stood at 602.75 lakh ha, up 6.5% from last year. If farmers can pass over the acute cash shortage and ensure that the sowing translates to strong growth in output, the increase in rural consumption can provide some moderation from the slowdown.
- Also, the rise in indirect taxes might provide cushioning effect to absorb the shock to the economy due the disruption caused by demonetisation.
- The overall growth rate of over 7% is predicated on enhanced public expenditure (12.8%, against 6.6% in 2015-16), manifested in pay panel payouts.
- However, most private economists have pared India's growth forecast to 6.3-6.4% for the 2016-17 fiscal year, citing the impact of the government's demonetisation move, which they reckon would linger for one more year.
- As a worst-case scenario, India could be back to the 6% growth levels of 2014-15 this fiscal, with the effects of the downturn dragging into 2017-18.
- This could happen in the event of weak consumer and investor sentiment dragging each other down with the consumer holding on to cash (precautionary demand for money).
- Therefore, the economy may not bounce back to normal even after bank has sufficient currency and the RBI lowers the repo rate. Instead, the banks should finally be willing to lend rather than park funds in G-Secs. On the demand side, job uncertainties could dampen demand for credit even if rates fall.

- The Centre must prepare for a spending push in the Budget, both in physical and social infrastructure, to redress the demand compression.

What Next?

The GDP estimate is a vital input for finance minister's budget on February 1. Until last year, the government's statisticians would wait for GDP data for the quarter through December before putting out full-year estimates. But the announcement of the GDP estimates had to be made early keeping in mind the advanced budget in 2017.

The CSO will revise numbers when the second estimate is released in end February. However, momentum is expected to stabilize into FY17-18 to 7.6%, on easing cash shortage, lower borrowing costs, constrained demand and higher public capex spending.

The government is expecting a revival in consumption demand in the last three months of the year once there's more cash available with households, and also on the manufacturing sector regaining some of the lost momentum.

Connecting the dots:

- Evaluate the first CSO data released on growth forecast of Indian economy.

Green Bonds – Emergence and Significance

What are Green Bonds?

A bond is a debt instrument with which an entity raises money from investors. As a result of the transaction, the bond issuer gets capital while the investors receive fixed income in the form of interest and once the bond matures, the money is repaid. Green bonds are issued by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, corporations, government agencies and municipalities.

In case of a green bond, the issuer publicly states that capital is being raised to fund 'green projects', which typically include those relating to renewable energy, emission reductions and so on. The main aim is to finance environmentally friendly businesses and assets. Lately green bonds have emerged as one of the key financing mechanisms for the global economy's to move towards a greener and sustainable future.

Emergence and Growth of Green Bonds

The **first green bonds were issued in 2007 by World Bank and European Investment Bank**. Ever since the first issue the green bond market has grown exponentially and is currently pegged at over \$180 billion. This mode of raising funds has seen extensive participation from corporates and financial institutions, including sovereign and municipal bodies across the world in both developed and developing economies.

2015 was a big year for green bonds as world markets witnessed currency green bonds, innovative structuring and also various nations coming up with their first green bond issue. Asia has emerged as a top destination for green bonds because of market-driven state policies and rapid growth of green bonds in India and China.

India and Green Bonds

- The Exim Bank of India issued a five-year \$500 million green bond, which was **India's first dollar-denominated green bond**. Yes Bank also raised Rs 1,000 crore via green bond issue.
- A growing number of corporates and financial institutions have resorted to this innovative mechanism to raise capital and even for attracting foreign investments.
- India also received investment through its first **Green Masala Bond** (rupee-denominated bond), with the International Financial Corporation raising an off-shore rupee bond on London Stock Exchange for investing in Yes Bank's green bond. This was a fine example of how innovations in emerging markets can capture global attention.
- Green bond issuance in the country has witnessed a manifold increase and India is now the seventh largest green bond market globally.
- These bonds have been crucial for raising capital for sunrise sectors like renewable energy. It has assisted India in sustainable growth.
- Various sectors which have received investment through the green bonds are the low carbon transport sector and low carbon buildings. However, sectors such as water management and waste management have not been successful enough to raise money through green bonds due to sector-specific issues and also because the projects are smaller in size and geographically dispersed.

Regulatory Performance

Indian regulators have shown exemplary foresight in recognising green bonds as a key tool towards financing the nation's climate change targets and in guiding the development of the green bond market through necessary policies and reforms.

- In January 2016, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) published its official green bond guidelines and requirements for Indian issuers.
- The Reserve Bank of India also passed regulatory reforms for strengthening and expanding India's corporate bond market.

Conclusion – Tapping the Real Potential

India's green bond market has not been tapped completely. It has a limited number of issuers so far. However, because of increasing interest from the government and market regulators, 2017 can expect a further growth in raising capital through the green bonds and also more policy and regulations for the green bond market.

- For greater success, one very important step that needs to be taken is the clear classification of and a formal definition of green projects or green bonds to ensure understanding across sectors.
- India, in the next few years, is also set to introduce the Blue Bond issuance. Blue bonds are those bonds which are specifically used to finance water infrastructure. Globally, the blue bond issue has crossed \$10 billion. It is imperative for India to utilise such innovative mechanisms for water infrastructure augmentation as well.
- Other innovative mechanisms such as securitisation can also be promoted. Many standalone green projects such as roof top solar, energy efficiency and rural water supply still remain unattractive to institutional investors owing to the smaller scale and vast geographical spread. Aggregation and securitisation of such projects will give them the much needed push.
- With the focus of urbanisation and infrastructure development in India growing consistently in the policy sphere, the green bonds are expected to witness a huge growth for financing water supply projects in cities such as Pune and Hyderabad and even development of smart cities.
- Collective participation of regulators, policymakers, corporate and financial institutions is also important to utilise the green bonds in addressing climate change.

Connecting the dots

- What are green bonds? How can these bonds be instrumental in giving a push to infrastructural development while giving due regards to sustainable growth and the challenges of climate change?

Reforms in India's Foreign Trade Policy

Introduction

The global economy is undergoing a major transition whether it is from the point of view of the producer or the consumer. This major change is occurring due to the rapid technological and socio-economic changes that are occurring. Technological changes have led to major innovations and faster obsolescence of existing products. Earlier, the developing economies had more time to adapt and evolve with the changes in the environment. However, the availability of time is a luxury nowadays which is not easily available.

Consumers are defining consumption patterns globally and owing to their technological literacy skills, they are able to adapt to the new products and technologies at a rapid rate. As a result of the above changes and use of artificial intelligence in production processes, there is need for the emerging economies to reorient their trade policies in a manner that keeps pace with this quick evolution.

India's Trade Policy – Problems

- India's trade policy has a major limitation wherein it focuses on incentivising businesses after exports have taken place. As a result the trade promotion incentives do not target emerging firms to attain export competitiveness but reward already successful exporters to improve their margins.
- The trade policy does not have provisions for interventions focussing on value-addition and employment generation. This implies that the policy is not working on long term structural measures but more towards short term result oriented measures which are not sustainable in the long run.
- Trade promotion is still restricted to traditional trade fair type activities. No doubt that these activities are important for promotion and business development, but a change of approach is required in this age of growing internet and mobile technology which requires activities to be more network oriented.
- Absence of institutions which can provide support for new product development and their placement in the global market in a selfless manner. These institutions can be used for ancillary activities such as development of prototypes, research and development etc.
- India's trade policy also suffers from an archaic design. The trade policy and negotiations over emphasis on tariffs which are not very important for market access gains. Trade today is guided by various other factors such as technical and quality standards.
- India has not been successful in tapping the potential that the huge domestic markets and the economies of scale offer to attract foreign direct investment and technology transfers. This is observed based on trends which show that MNCs attracted by the size of the Indian consumer base often do not expand operations in India.
- Investors have to face a combination of high transaction and input costs, supply-side constraints, and infrastructure deficits which is a major obstacle in setting up and operations of industries. As a result international investors also show reluctance in setting up and expanding business in India.

Reforms in India's Trade Policy

India has to overcome the existing limitations in the trade policy. Simultaneously it also has to gear up for the upcoming changes in technology and socio economic setup to meet the rapidly evolving needs and demands of consumers and producers India needs to bring changes as suggested below.

- India should restructure in a manner where it is able to move human resources and capital from under-performing or dying sectors and re-employ them in more competitive activities.
- The trade policy should be on which adequately rewards value-addition and promotes employment in more productive sectors.

- To match the pace of changes taking place, India should promote investment in innovation and new product development and also help such products find a global market.
- Fair market access for Indian products subject to stringent technological and quality standards in global markets is also essential.
- The huge Indian markets and the domestic economies of scale that they offer should be tapped efficiently to attract FDI in productive sectors.
- Indian firms should be assisted and aided to be able to meet the quality and technical standards defined by government regulators or as a result of the competition in the market. Trade agreements and other institutional solutions can be used to reduce the cost of complying with these standards. This will also help in empowerment of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME).

Conclusion

The challenges posed by changes in technology and global consumer preferences are changing the pattern of FDI-led outsourcing and reducing the future FDI-led export growth. The governments measures in areas of administrative changes through ease of doing business reforms and infrastructure development might help in reviving the potential of FDI in economic growth.

A review of the overall trade strategy is the need of the hour for India. The changes have to be made in terms of trade promotion schemes and activities and the design of trade agreements and negotiating priorities. These measures will determine India's ability to undertake structural change and push for longer-term competitiveness.

Connecting the dots

- Consumer preferences and production techniques are undergoing a major change in the recent times. Discuss how these changes are impacting the trade patterns and how India needs to restructure its trade policy in the light of these changes.

Start-Up India and Its Problems

Introduction

The Start-up India, Stand-Up India campaign was initiated by the government last year with the intention of providing handholding support to upcoming ventures, promoting entrepreneurship, offering financial support and also allowing tax breaks.

Provisions of Start-up India

Certain essential features of the Start-up India campaign are:

- Government funded corpus worth Rs. 10,000 crores.
- Credit Guarantee Corpus of Rs. 500 crores per annum to be used for four years.
- Mobile Application for registration of start-up ventures.
- Tax exemptions under the Income-tax Act, 1961.
- Self certified labour compliance and exemption from labour inspections.
- Award for incubators supporting the start-ups.

Provisions of Stand-up India

- Composite Loan between Rs. 10 Lakhs and Rs. 100 Lakhs
- Loan available for SC/ST and women entrepreneurs above 18 years of age.
- Loan available for green field projects only.
- Enterprise whether in the manufacturing, trading or service sector is eligible for the loan.

Problem Areas

As the programme enters its second year of operation, not much progress has been seen. Very few start-ups have become a part of the plan and government is also struggling with the basic design issues. As a result, the government is facing the following challenges:

Problems related to Venture Capitals

Corpus Contribution

Venture capitalists (VC) were supposed to receive funding from Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) managed corpus of Rs10,000 crores. However, no money has been disbursed under this plan even though SIDBI has already sanctioned money. This is because, in the funding so provided, the bank only puts in 15% of the total corpus and the balance is to be contributed by the VC itself. In such a scenario, where the VCs are failing to raise funds the entire programme is suffering to take off.

Investment Limitations

Under the programme the government had initially stated that VCs could only early-stage start-ups. This restricted the investment options of VCs. Subsequent lack of interest by the VCs led to alteration of rules under the programme.

SEBI Registration

Another challenge that the VCs faced was the mandatory registration of participating investors with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Since many VCs are not registered, this led to them being barred from being a part of this scheme.

Problems related to Start-ups

Access to the Scheme

As a result of the eligibility criteria the access to the start up India programme is complicated to such an extent that the government received only about 1,368 applications and out of these, only 502 were recognized as start-ups.

Tax Benefit Availability

Even tax benefit access is complicated and as a result only eight start-ups have been granted tax benefits under the scheme. Further, the provisions for allowing tax benefits assume that the enterprise will be profitable within three years of operation. Hence, the tax benefit ended up being redundant because there were no profits in such a short span on which the start-ups could avail these benefits.

Incubators Availability

Industry-academia partnerships through new incubators could have been a huge boost for the start up India programme. However, the lack of sufficient incubators has also been another hurdle in the way of success of this programme. Only recently, established incubators have been selected to receive government funding to scale up operations.

Conclusion

The government now needs to ensure that it provides an enabling environment to the start-ups rather than treating it like an infant industry. Government needs to move towards rationalising its approach. Government funds can only short-circuit the process.

There is no doubt that such large scale programmes do take time to come up with the expected results but it has to be ensured that all efforts to push the programmes are on track and stay viable. For this to happen, all stakeholders need to come together and put in the required efforts. The entire burden cannot be put on the government. The private sector, the research and development organisations also need to step in.

Connecting the dots

- Discuss the provisions and objectives of the Start-up India Programme. Critically analyse the performance of this programme since its inception.

The need to adhere to FRBM targets

In news: the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Committee submitted its report recently. Though it has not been made public, news reports say that the panel has recommended fiscal consolidation, but not at the expense of growth. Let us have a look at how macro environment affects micro level decisions.

Budget and fiscal management

- At the time of budget, the household level is more concerned about individual tax rates and prices of goods as they change in response to taxes that the government levies.

- However, seldom the macro part of the budget- fiscal deficit and tax-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio- is taken into consideration at household level. It is important to know what they mean as they affect at the household level.
- **Fiscal deficit**
 - When the government spends more than what it collects as revenue.
 - Revenue= Taxes (like personal income, corporate, excise, customs) collected by government
 - If revenue is equal to the expenditure, the government's budget is balanced, but most governments run on a 'deficit' or spend more than they collect.
- This 'deficit' is financed by 'borrowing'. The market loans in Budget 2016 were Rs. 4.25 trillion or 21% of the budget of Rs. 19.78 trillion. The fiscal deficit was 3.9% of GDP against target of 3.5% for 2016-17.
- **The FRBM targets are 3% fiscal deficit and a zero revenue deficit.**
- In simplistic terms, revenue deficit is like credit card debt which finances current consumption, hence it is a bad loan. The fiscal deficit can be understood as home loan which leverages future income to build an appreciating asset.
- So, the government will borrow responsibly (as loans are debt) with fiscal deficit being 3% and revenue deficit being zero.

Government needs to borrow

- India's tax-to-GDP ratio is just 16.6% as compared to emerging market economy average of 21% and OECD average of 34%.
- *Tax-to-GDP ratio= it is the ratio of tax collected compared to national gross domestic product (GDP). Some countries aim to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio by a certain percentage to address deficiencies in their budgets.*
- Tax on income in 2016-17 budget was 18% of the budget. Only 1% of the Indian population pays income tax. However, looking at the lifestyle changes and the means through which money is spent shows the gigantic number of cases of tax evasion.
- Hence, to finance the budget deficits, the government needs finances which it ultimately borrows from market.
- In 2009-10, fiscal deficit was 6.6% of GDP and government's borrowing programme spiked. Large government borrowing programmes usually lead to financial repression
- **Financial repression** is the ability of the government to attract household saving to itself by fixing the rules. Here, the government fixes the investment rules of banks and insurance firms so that it can have steady income that goes into G-Secs.
- That is why, the savings rate are usually low, FD rates are usually below inflation and a traditional life insurance policy gives around 3% return a year over a period of 15-20 years.
- Atleast 24% of total bank deposits are invested in government bonds because of the formation of rules. Even the insurance companies ensure that a large part of the premium is invested in government securities.

- Thus, reforms in the capital market have been much easier than in banking or insurance as there are no fixed investment rules that take household money through mutual funds or other market-related products.
- The government worries when bank deposit rates slow down or the insurance premiums fall as people will divert their savings elsewhere, thereby making it difficult for the government to finance itself easily.

Committing to FRBM targets

- A high fiscal deficit that goes to finance current government consumption or pre-election freebies as well as low tax-to-GDP ratio is a worrisome trend as it affects the individuals who is the taxpayer, the investor and the inflation-hit consumer.
- If the government commits to the FRBM targets irrespective of pre-election year or not, will help the government in maintaining finances.
- Setting up of public debt management authority (PDMA) is inevitable as it will take the conflict of managing the government borrowing programme out of an inflation-targeting central bank.
- Better tax compliance will increase tax-to-GDP ratio. If the tax evasion continues, government will be forced to borrow more which will ultimately affect the
- If the FRBM targets are complied with, the ground is set for ending the financial repression carried out by banks and instead should be done through insurance companies.
- Thus, FRBM shows how macro numbers relate to micro lives and individuals and households should act more responsibly.

Background

- The concept of a fiscal responsibility framework was first mooted in 2001 as the government was close to fiscal deficit of 6% of GDP
- The roadmap was laid down as part of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003 which asked that the government's revenue deficit be eliminated by 2008 and fiscal deficit reduced to 3% of GDP.
- The framework saw early success and the central government managed to bring down its deficit to a 30-year low of 2.5% of GDP in 2007-08.
- Following the global financial crisis, the fiscal deficit once again surged to above 6% of GDP. Since then, the government has failed to bring the deficit back down to 3%.
- In 2016, the Government had constituted a Committee to review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act under the Chairmanship of Shri N.K. Singh.
- Fiscal management becomes all the more important post-demonetisation and the resultant slump in consumption expenditure. The view is that the government could be tempted to increase public spending to boost consumption.

Connecting the dots:

- What is your understanding about fiscal deficit and fiscal consolidation? How does macro economic outlook affect at micro level? Explain.

Budget 2017 Recommendations – Reforms in Indian Economy**Introduction**

The 2017 Finance Budget is expected to be a very crucial one for the economy of the country. With the country still under the impact of the demonetisation drive and the economy experiencing a resultant slowdown, all eyes are set on the budget.

A lot of structural and institutional reforms are on the cards which include the implementation of the landmark Goods and Service Tax (GST) and other reforms such as the bankruptcy code. The budget needs to include measures which address all issues which have been plaguing the economy and ensure implementation of above reforms in a smooth manner to send a positive signal across.

Direct Tax

Following the demonetisation drive and to ensure that the economy gets going as quickly as possible certain direct tax reforms are highly essential.

- Tax benefits need to be given to promote spending and also mobilise savings especially those belonging to the youth and the households as well.
- Tax deduction limits under Section 80C of the Income-tax Act, 1961 can also be raised. Due to this a lot of money can be diverted towards securities market.
- Various deposit schemes have a lock-in provision of five years. The budget can reduce this period which will lead to more bank deposits and thus improved resource availability with the banks.
- The corporate sector can also be encouraged to expand by way of cut in corporate tax rates. This will boost business confidence and increase demand.

Encouraging Financial Savings

- In India, savings in pension instruments form approximately 1% of the GDP only. To improve this ratio it is important to introduce a uniform tax treatment for all pension instruments and ensure a quantitative post tax return from these instruments.
- The budget can also re-introduce instruments like the inflation indexed bonds. These bonds will provide higher risk with relatively lower return.
- By way of changes in tax slabs and reduction of tax rates the government can boost consumption demand. This will increase savings for the people and also address the liquidity squeeze due to demonetisation.

Reduction in Cost of Funds

- For transforming the economy, it is essential to reduce the interest rates in the economy. Implementation of GST will go a long way in lowering economic costs in the medium term.
- Guidelines regarding financial instruments such as ECBs should be relaxed to reduce their cost of operations as well.
- Banks should also selectively regulate their lending rates for critical sectors such as housing and renewable energy.

Medium and Small Scale Industries

- The Medium and Small Scale Enterprises (MSME) sector has been facing a tough time in the less cash environment post demonetisation. There is a need for reforms for this sector as well.
- SIDBI could open a refinance window along with RBI to provide more and easier access to finance.
- A special centralised database could be created for the MSMEs. This could constitute details of information of bank accounts all MSMEs. Linking this with the Aadhar data will further enhance transparency.
- Use of technology and automating assessment of financial data will reduce decision making time and also the interest cost for MSMEs.

Public Investment

- Public investment for capital expenditure is an evergreen need of the economy. It will give a push to the creation of productive assets in the economy.
- The Government will also have to introduce measures to promote crowd sourced private investments. This will give an immense boost to infrastructural growth and development and overall economic growth.
- The budget should also have provisions to promote a vibrant corporate bond market for infrastructure growth. The government could create a new trading platform for corporate bonds.

Contemporary Innovations

With the government pushing the country towards digital economy and cashless transactions with its flagship programme of Digital India, a lot of innovations are required in the budget.

- Budget provisions need to work towards giving the financial technology sector a boost.
- An enabling regulatory and licensing framework for safeguarding interests of various stakeholders and increasing efficiency is important to encourage more players in this sector.
- Innovations which promote secure and safe transactions will be essential for assisting India truly leverage digital payments.

- Budget provisions should boost National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) to create digital infrastructure for a cashless economy.

Other Reforms

Other miscellaneous but highly crucial reforms include:

- **Banking Sector:** There is a need for greater infusion of capital in this budget.
- **Disinvestment:** The government needs to make certain smart disinvestment moves in this budget. This will increase capital availability and help in infrastructural development.
- **GST Implementation:** It is highly important for the budget to end any further delay in the implementation of GST. This will increase investor confidence and reduce uncertainty.
- **Unorganised Sector:** Incentives need to be given to the unorganised sector to shift to the organised and formal sector.

Conclusion

All the above reforms suggested above are of equal relevance for the economy. It is therefore imperative for the government to give due attention to all these areas. However, it is important for the government to ensure that measures for the above reforms do not have a very major impact on the fiscal deficit of the country. For this purpose the budget can even propose a target of fiscal deficit. The ongoing financial year has laid the foundation for a very strong economy. It is now upon the Budget 2017 to build upon this foundation by ensuring implementation of reforms efficiently and effectively.

Connecting the dots

- With the recent demonetisation drive and the way Indian economy is shaping up, it is on the threshold of emerging as one of the strongest economies. Suggest certain measures and explain how those measures could help India achieve the above.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

TOPIC: General Studies 3

- *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science & technology*

Communicating the science

- Science has brought forward remarkable changes in lives of human beings. This has been possible because the researches made in laboratories and on-field sites have been documented and communicated to the world.
- Science communication activities have gained momentum in India in past few years where efforts have been made from both governmental and non-governmental platforms to enhance the public understanding of science.
- The idea has been to help science and a scientific culture penetrate India's socio-culturally diverse society, and to transform it into a nation of scientifically thinking and scientifically aware people.
- However, science communication needs to be more effective, both in terms of quality and quantity. There still exists illiteracy or ignorance about common scientific principles, such as the fact that the Earth orbits the Sun or that gravity keeps the man grounded.

What is science?

- Science is all about details, precision, accuracy, and it is indeed 99% perspiration.
- It has been known from the scientists that the beauty and joy in doing science lies in those rare moments when the pieces of a puzzle come together. That is why science is considered a highly individualistic, personal affair.
- They do communicate their work to non-specialists, especially in matters of obtaining funding or seeking promotions and awards.
- However, in universities and research institutes, their primary responsibility is to train the next generation of students through the practical of conducting high-calibre research. In this research, their goal is absolute quality, ideally without any concern for possible practical applications.
- The research findings in soft sciences like ecology, sociology and economics are easier to understand for a layman in contrast to hard sciences like physics, chemistry and biology.
- Many would claim to understand something about climate change, body language or inflation as opposed to say hadrons, the Mannich reaction or epigenetics. But it remains to be known if the person actually understands soft science which is easier to communicate?

Communicating the science

- The whole business of research outreach is fraught with problems.
- The standard sequence for scientific work should be patent, refereed publication, newspaper, with the first and third steps wholly optional in an academic institution.
- The danger in encouraging “communication” too much is that there would be a temptation to reverse the order and make it newspaper, mostly no publication (or controversial publication), and then no patent. This ofcourse is an extreme situation but still possible as it is already happening in some CSIR and DBT/DST laboratories, sadly even from some IITs.
- The main problem with a scientist trying to disseminate his or her work to the general public is that the detail that is lost in communicating with the public is not a superfluous extra.
- The detail is the whole work. Without this detail, there would be no point in the work. Details are hard to understand and appreciate. Many breakthrough discoveries are incredibly hard to envisage, carry out and understand.

This brings forward simple but intriguing questions

- *Do scientists in publicly funded institutions need to communicate the gist of their work to the general taxpaying public? Are they morally bound to do it?*
- *Does an increased awareness of science among lay persons increase its acceptability, and eventually create a better sense of its requirement, thereby leading to increased funding?*
- *Or on other hand, is it easy to communicate high science to the public?*
- *Is there a difference in communicating the hard and soft sciences to non-specialists?*
- *In simplifying scientific matters for the sake of explaining it to lay people, does one lose the essential thread of the work?*

These questions have no easy answers. But they can be answered by using various modes of communication to reach out to the masses.

What can be done?

- India is critically lacking in large mass of science communication experts, who on the one hand can talk with scientists and on the other can disseminate essential aspects of the science to the public. The community of such science experts in India is non-coordinated and sub-critical.
- The print media has taken science to common man through Vigyan (Science) — a monthly popular science magazine in Hindi — published by Vigyan Parishad since 1915. This can be encouraged more as today, Indian science magazines such as Science Today and Bulletin of Sciences have been discontinued.
- Cue should be taken from National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) which has published Hindi popular science journal Vigyan Pragati (Progress in Science), Science Reporter (an English monthly) and Science Ki Dunia (an Urdu quarterly).

- Newspapers are doing their bit by including 'science and technology' column which include scientific discoveries as well as advancements in existing technologies. But there can be a lot more of this in TV where people of all ages get knowledge in an appealing way.
- Folk media such as puppet shows, street plays, stage performances, folk songs and folk dances have the capability to reach segments of society where other forms of media have limitations. Such traditional means of communication are not only entertaining, but also offer two-way communication and are cost effective.
- Creation of science journalists who can present useful science in an interesting and innovative manner. Along with it, India can take initiative in mobilising like-minded people in South Asia to form Science Writers' and Journalists' Associations in each country, with help of international organisations.

Conclusion

The Constitution of India provides for a fundamental duty "to develop the scientific temper, humanism and spirit of enquiry". Hence it is critical for India to create a cadre of scientists and science journalists who can fire an enquiring attitude and analytical approach that leads to rational thinking and the pursuit of truth without prejudice.

Connecting the dots:

- What is 'science communication'? Discuss the challenges faced by it and opportunities available in this field.

New digital reigns in human life

2017 will be the coming of age of the tech-enhanced human. Though it is difficult to predict a profound new trend in a one-year time frame, but this evolution promises to bring a fundamental shift with long-term implications for organisations, individuals and economies.

- Tech enhancement should be seen through a framework of three 'A's — assistance, augmentation and automation.
- These have been quietly gaining momentum over the last couple of years which are now expected to go mainstream in 2017.
- For example, the digital assistants powered by artificial intelligence have been in vogue for quite a time. From SIRI in iPhones and iPADS to Cortana in Microsoft Windows 10 devices, artificial intelligence has made inroads into everyday lives of human beings in a subtle but significant manner.

- *Artificial Intelligence (AI)- an area of computer science that emphasises the creation of intelligent machines that work and react like humans such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.*

The three A's

Assistance

- The automated software applications or platforms, from the basic Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to the sophisticated virtual assistants of today, assisting human users with search and retrieval related intelligence are getting better.
- With the enhancement in their capabilities, their demand and usage will also spike.
- According to a research organisation, there will be 1.8 billion consumer users of virtual assistants worldwide by 2021 and 843 million enterprise users.
- Whether it is google assistance or Amazon's Alexa, they work alongside humans and complement their skills, thereby easing the tasks quietly.

Augmentation

- It enhances the human core capabilities by providing specifically contextual support that is required to do a task.
- The way doctors are working with IBM Watson is a great example of augmentation.
- *IBM Watson- it has deep cognitive computing skills which assimilates vast amounts of patient information and interprets them reducing time for doctors to make their diagnoses.*

Automation

- By taking a step forward from assistance and augmentation, automation all together removes the need for human effort.
- It is not complimentary to human skills but is a substitute bringing in agility to tasks which is very necessary today.
- But automation need not necessarily always mean job losses, especially in areas where significant judgement calls are needed. For example, self-driving cars.

There are different approaches taken by industry in tech enhancement. In retail, consumer decisions are becoming more assisted, the supply chains are becoming more augmented. In healthcare sector, at the patient end there is assistance in the form of chatbots and virtual platforms, while at the provider end there is augmentation (diagnosis) as well as automation (surgery).

India and Artificial intelligence

- Policymakers in India have to take into account the growing opportunities related to artificial intelligence.

- PM's flagship initiatives — Make in India, Skill India, Digital India — will be impacted by the recent advances in artificial intelligence, making it imperative for Indian policymakers to take both an immediate and a long-term view.
- The private sector has been working rigorously in this field to provide maximum support to human beings. The government should also propel more and more research in this area. The AI can be used in many ways:
 - The farmer's smartphone will not only track weather forecast but also perhaps advise him on the next best action to take if the weather turns inclement.
 - A smart fishing app will learn from the past performance of fishing trips on the high seas to guide Indian fishermen on improving their catch.
 - A clever tax collection app will help the government detect sophisticated methods of tax evasion while a subsidy app will better target benefits to those who need them the most thereby helping plug leakages.
 - Even for national security strategy, India can use the machine intelligence in the ways Pentagon's DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) model uses which collaborates defence research with private sector and universities in order to create dual-purpose technologies.
- The proposed National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) platform, which would link citizen databases, might be a good start for creating a machine intelligence-based platform with both national security and civilian benefits.
- For this, there is a need to make radical recommendations through National Education Policy on alternative models of education that would be suitable to an AI-powered economy of future.
- Though, the issue of job creation will arise as technology will work with humans, but job prospects depends on the kind of technology used. Augmentation will not lead to job losses while automation might replace human labour.
- Also, there might be economic impact of tech enhancement on individuals and institutions as labour cost advantage will slowly vanish, particularly in emerging economies. Hence, India may see losses in job creation or provision if not adapting the emerging trends.

Conclusion

It is difficult for India to replicate China's manufacturing strategy from the 1980s, hence, India has no option but to develop a new economic strategy that relies on technological innovation. The 'fourth industrial revolution' offers new possibilities to deal with the twin national security challenges — cross-border terrorism from Pakistan and the growing gap in conventional military capabilities with China. Flagship initiatives like Make In India, Skill India should become simulators for research and innovation in artificial intelligence. Thus, the recent advances in AI are a wake up call to Indian policymakers to spur AI-based innovation and AI-ready infrastructure in preparing India's jobs and skills markets.

Connecting the dots:

- The manufacturing export driven economy is now a passé. India should augment its scientific capacities in artificial intelligence for a robust growth. Do you agree? Critically examine.



HEALTH

TOPIC: General Studies 2

- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Health systems leapfrogging in India: Need and Possibility

India's Progress in Health Sector

No doubt India has had its set of challenges in the health sector in terms of efficiency and effectiveness but India has made a lot of progress in the health sector in the last decade. The same can be seen from the following improvements in the key indicators of health in India:

- Life expectancy has increased by almost four years during the last ten years.
- The rate of infant mortality has declined from 57 to 37 fatalities per 1,000 live births in ten years.
- The number of institutional births rose to 79% in 2015, from 41% in 2005.
- India was also declared polio-free in 2014, and tetanus-free in 2015.

Reasons for India's progress

The reasons which have helped India in the above mentioned progress are:

- Active and increased involvement of the public and private sectors.
- Government initiatives have mobilized communities on health.
- There has been increased access to public health services.
- There is increased utilization of the available infrastructure.
- Almost 900,000 female community health volunteers (ASHAs, or accredited social health activists) have been deployed in rural areas and coverage of state-sponsored insurance schemes has also expanded.
- Private-sector innovation has improved cost efficiency and as a result services of international quality standards are available at low-cost.
- Implementation of well-defined protocols for complex procedures has assisted in reduction of error rate.
- Pioneering rare and complex surgical procedures have addressed local challenges and increased access to healthcare.

Challenges for India's Health Sector

In spite of the above progress and developments, India's health sector is still facing a lot of problems which act as a hurdle for further progress and as a result India has missed its Millennium Development Goals for healthcare, especially maternal and child mortality rates.

- India has a high incidence of communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs account for 60% of deaths in the country.
- Government expenditure on healthcare at 1.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) currently is very low compared to peer countries.
- Acute shortage of Public health infrastructure and staff availability. India faces a 50% shortfall in the supply of doctors.
- Inadequate utilization of and negligence in the maintenance of scarce public healthcare facilities. This also forces the people to go for expensive private healthcare thus increasing the cost of healthcare.
- Various public and private sector initiatives using new technologies and operating models have not been designed well for a higher scale.
- Governance of large public health programmes is weak.

Leapfrogging in Health Reforms

The need of the hour for India is to create a financially sustainable health infrastructure which is of very high quality and cost efficient as well. India should opt for accelerated sustainable approach rather than a usual lengthy approach which includes high spending but marginal improvements. Therefore, India should scale up healthcare innovations or leapfrogs along with the current initiatives.

Leapfrogging means using a new technology, operating model, or pattern of behaviour to help a system skip development stages that were previously considered unavoidable.

- Technology includes new health-related activities and products.
- Operating model refers to modification in the organizational setup or in the delivery of health-related activities.
- Behavioural change refers to the evolving preferences and conduct of various individual and institutional stakeholders such as patients, health workers and payers.

Study of leapfrogging strategies across the world have helped in identified six essential results that should be achieved. A well-chosen combination of leapfrogs could also pave the way for an eventual transformation of the healthcare system.

- Ensure that innovation should appeal to a universal human trait. This makes leapfrog adoption easier.
- Adapt to survive, diversify to thrive. Operating models have to be designed as per needs of local communities. Customized products and services should be provided.
- Empower communities to shape and own the model. Encouraging community ownership of the model will result in a much higher impact, due to greater involvement of emotionally connected community participants.
- Actively build partnerships both within and outside the healthcare industry for innovations.

- Ensure design-to-scale. Engagement with the government is essential to design solutions that target the gap in public healthcare and can scale up effectively.
- Objectively evaluate the progress and ensure corrections based on regular review.

The Ecosystem Approach

Public-private Partnership model has certain limitations such as mistrust, push of commercial solutions, short-term financing, white elephant assets, and unclear outcomes with lower efficiency. As a result, the ecosystem approach is recommended. Ecosystem Approach mobilizes multiple stakeholders around a common, measurable outcome or goal. The concerned stakeholders are incentivized to collectively brainstorm for solutions and innovative business models to finance and deliver sustainable results.

Ecosystem Approach v/s PPP Model

The ecosystem approach is better than traditional PPPs in three significant ways:

- Ensures collective design of smart and holistic solutions by providing a forum for stakeholders to work together.
Example: GAVI, the global vaccine alliance, is leveraging new technologies and partnering with the private sector for efficient supply chain and data management, workforce training.
- Higher financial sustainability is achieved through innovative models.
Example: Social Impact bonds have gained traction in multiple capital markets as a tool for corporate social responsibility funding.
- Data-based decision-making helps in reviewing and identifying course corrections. A project management office can help in this.

Way Forward

The Ecosystem Model needs to be supplemented by appropriate reforms, robust governance and a genuine will for change. For the success of this model, the government has to ensure that it provides the requisite platform for engaging various stakeholders, and support the scaling-up of promising leapfrogs. On the other hand the private sector, including hospitals, pharmaceutical and non-governmental organizations, will have to focus on developing tailored, low-cost products and process innovations. Global partners can provide financing, expertise and access to their networks, to promote the growth of a sustainable Indian healthcare ecosystem.

Connecting the dots

- What is leapfrogging? Discuss the need for a leapfrogging approach and how it can assist in transforming the healthcare sector in India?
- Discuss the challenges that India's health sector faces. How can a multi-stakeholder approach help in addressing those challenges?

Child nutrition- making India healthy

There is a public health crisis looming in India in form of widespread maternal and child undernutrition.

- **One-third** of Indian **women** (of reproductive age) are undernourished.
- Around **60 million children** (under five years of age) are either stunted (low height-for-age) or wasted (low weight-for-height).
- Women and adolescent girls face the added burden of **societal discrimination** which is manifested through unequal access to food, healthcare and resources. As a result, about **42% of Indian women are underweight** when they begin pregnancy—compared to about 15% in African countries.

What does it convey?

- With such poor ground level realities, it shows that India has been unable to address its long-pending issue of malnutrition and giving priority to early life-cycle investments.
- Despite knowing the universal fact that healthy child develops from a healthy womb, 50% of growth failure in first two years of child begins from the womb due to poor maternal nutrition.
- India needs a targeted intervention policy of the first 1,000 days of a child's life (from conception to the two-year post-natal period) where the child and mother are given all the necessary nutrients in adequate amount.

Understanding undernutrition

- Undernutrition occurs when the body doesn't get enough nutrients which can cause physical or mental disability. Lack of nutrition is not only a health risk but also an economic risk.
- Undernutrition is one of the leading causes of child mortality. Close to 70% of children between the age of six months and five years in India suffer from anaemia, which, if left untreated, increases susceptibility to illness, raising morbidity.
- Undernutrition also has adverse, irreversible consequences for a child's cognitive and physical development.
- Adding to the challenges, there is wide spread disparities between states in mother and child's nutritional status. *Stunting under age 5: Uttar Pradesh has 50% whereas Kerala has 19%*
- These disparities have been aggravated further with the budgetary realignments after the 14th Finance Commission. It has been observed that Central allocations to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) declined almost 10%, from Rs. 15,502 crore in 2015-16 to Rs. 14,000 crore in 2016-17.

Solution to this

Policy makers can work upon few areas which can eliminate the existence of undernutrition in India:

Early life intervention

- The child's development begins from mother's womb. The government should rigorously carry out the regular pre-natal check up drive through ASHA or ANMs to ensure that they have balanced diet as well as go for institutional delivery.
- Post-natal care should be monitored where the first 1,000 days of a child's life are crucial for reducing a child's susceptibility to infections, and breaking the link between undernutrition, disease and mortality, should be targeted.

Direct and indirect interventions

- If there is direct nutrition intervention by government, the stunting can be reduced by 20%. Direct Nutrition Interventions are the set of proven nutrition specific interventions that have immediate and direct impact on nutrition status. It also targets the immediate causes of malnutrition.
- Here, nutrition interventions may include vitamin A and zinc supplementation, deworming for children, iron folic acid supplements for pregnant women etc.
- Indirect interventions such as access to water, sanitation and hygiene will attempt to tackle to remaining 80%.
- Schemes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should be used to leverage policy complementarities with household sanitation and encourage behavioural change through social messaging and hold information-education-communication activities for pregnant and lactating mothers.

Right to nutrition

- There is a need for universal, rights-based nutrition services delivery which shall overcome disparities across gender, communities and geographical regions.
- For example, ICDS supplementary nutrition programme: Food reaches barely 20% of children in Uttar Pradesh, but over 90% of children in Odisha.
- This proves that policy is fine, the implementation inefficiency leads to lack of outreach.

Restructuring ICDS

- ICDS is a welfare programme which provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children under 6 years of age and their mothers. These services are provided from Anganwadi centres established mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers. However, the results have not matched expectations.
- Restructuring should be done to target and strengthen last-mile delivery. The reforms should include standardizing the nutritional component of supplementary food, prioritizing educational outreach, and investing in anganwadi centres and workers.

- Field studies have established links between provision of school meals and improved learning outcomes for children.
- Additionally, food fortification of staples (including wheat, flour, rice and edible oils) represents a cost-effective and scalable solution to enhance nutrient intake.
- Standards for food fortification should be established and guidelines changed to promote the use of fortified inputs in ICDS-provided hot cooked meals.
- PPP method can be used to leverage technological solutions for scaling up food fortification initiatives, and complement the government's outreach efforts through mass awareness and education campaigns in communities.

Nodal body

- The government efforts and interventions should be carried out through a nodal government body which will have responsibility for meeting time-bound nutrition targets, and coordinating multi-sectoral programmes, including the ICDS, the National Rural Health Mission, the midday meal scheme, and the public distribution system.

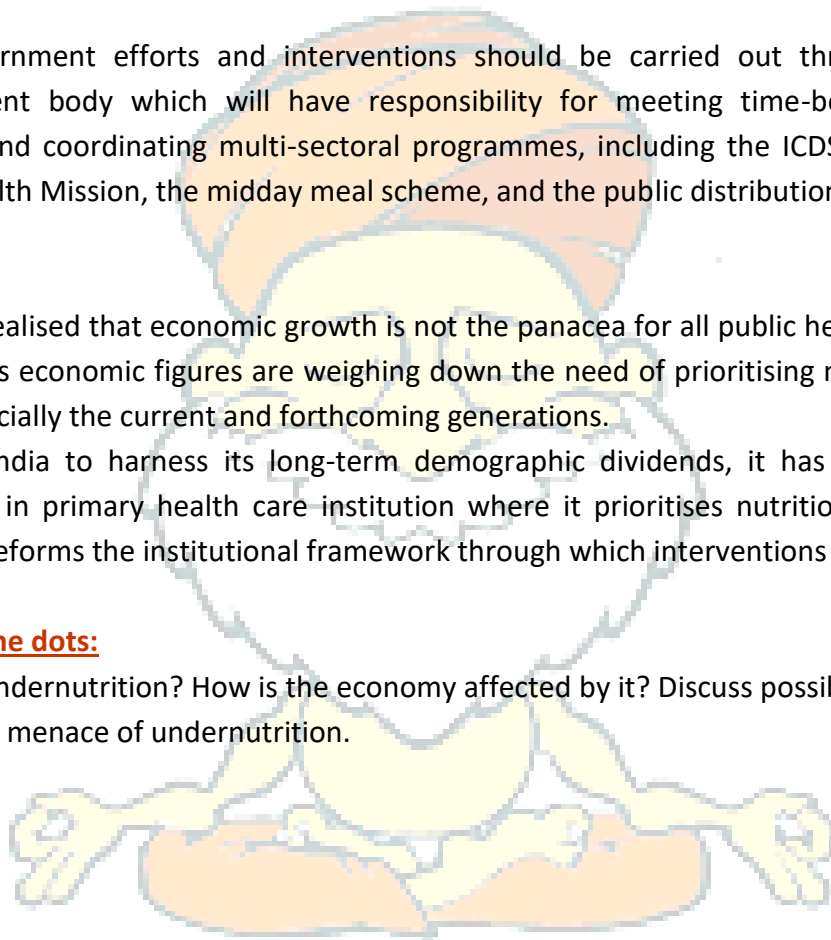
Conclusion

It has to be realised that economic growth is not the panacea for all public health problems. The ambitious economic figures are weighing down the need of prioritising nutrition of the citizens, especially the current and forthcoming generations.

Hence, For India to harness its long-term demographic dividends, it has to proactively involve itself in primary health care institution where it prioritises nutrition in its health agenda and reforms the institutional framework through which interventions are delivered.

Connecting the dots:

- What is undernutrition? How is the economy affected by it? Discuss possible solutions to tackle the menace of undernutrition.



SECURITY

TOPIC: General Studies 3

- *Security challenges and their management in border areas*

Challenges in front of the Indian Army

The turbulence caused by selection of General Bipin Rawat as the new Army Chief, superseding two army commanders senior to him, has seemingly calmed down within the first week of the changeover. However, the challenges he inherited as the Army Chief need a refreshed lookout and speedy resolutions.

Modernisation of Army

- The modernisation of army has been lagging for many years
- The army had identified 24 modernisation projects of which 11 of them were deemed as critical. However, even the 'critical' projects also did not see much of progress, thereby revealing the current fragile condition of the Indian Army.
- Infantry modernisation has been a pothole despite initiation of procurement of artillery guns, air defence assets and helicopters. Today, the infantry soldier lacks even a modern basic assault rifle.
- The procurement of improved bullet proof jackets and ballistic helmets for the soldiers has been talked about since long, but neither has seen light of day.
- General Rawat is from the infantry and hence the lack of modern equipment for the foot-soldier ought to be his greatest concern.
- Thus, continuous modernization of the force by gradual induction of latest equipment for giving a futuristic outlook to the forces is the need of the day.

Intra-army grapple

- General Rawat's supersession of two officers belonging to armoured corps and the mechanised infantry is proof of the fact that in current environment, infantry is perceived to be dominating the army
- However, a bias towards infantry from the new Army Chief may further open long-existing fissures within the organisation.
- The implementation of AVS Committee report which provides for faster promotions for Army officers up to the rank of Colonel in order to reduce their age profile at the combat level and ensure that they get promotions commensurate to their jobs which was subsequently supported by Supreme Court decision have already caused a lot of heartburn in the army.
- Such evolving dynamics is not good for an organisation like army which is considered strong when all its branches are well coordinated and cooperated, even in peace time.

- In such a scenario, General Rawat has to not only act fairly, but also to be seen to act fairly to restore the cohesiveness of the army.

The seniority rigidity

- The two superseded officers, Lt General Praveen Bakshi and Lt General PM Hariz, have decided to continue as army commanders. This might however create some functional problems as seniority matters a lot in a rigidly hierarchical organisation like the army.
- However, it is expected to be handled and dealt with deftly as both the officers shall be retiring in November.

Seventh pay commission

- General Rawat will have to take up with the government the need for urgent action to meet the aspirations of the soldiers from the Seventh Pay Commission.
- The four core issues - questions of status equivalence, hardship and risk allowances, the military service pay and non-functional upgradation – need to be resolved urgently.
- These issues have a direct impact on the morale and effectiveness of soldiers in operations while having the potential to damage the delicate balance of civil-military relations.

Lack of infrastructure

- Though the army chief has highlighted that the Indian army is tasked to fight a two-front war, that is China and Pakistan, there is lot to be done to make India stronger- militarily as well as infrastructure wise.
- A Mountain Strike Corps for the China border was raised during UPA II government but the state of its equipping and infrastructure has been lagging way behind planned targets.
- Even the slow pace of construction of roads by the Border Roads Organisation and the delay in commencement of laying of strategic railway lines makes it extremely difficult for the army to deploy troops within the required time-frame should the need arise.

Internal security- J&K

- The situation in J&K has deteriorated dramatically in Jammu and Kashmir, with terrorists targeting army camps at Uri and Nagrota last year.
- There was a huge spike in cross border infiltration with 112 terrorists coming in 2016 as compared to 30 in 2015.
- In the same way, the army lost 63 soldiers in the state, more than double the previous year's figures.
- Thus, one of the main actions to be undertaken by the Army Chief is to assure the calm environment in the valley.

Conclusion

Procurement of weapon systems and equipment is an important function for managing the operational health, morale and capability of the armed forces. The procurement process is undoubtedly full of challenges but these are not insurmountable. The Army being the largest service and fielding the largest array of equipment needs to improve its own processes by carrying out an internal analysis and taking effective steps to speed up the procurement process. Accepting the shortcomings in its processes and taking steps to overcome them, particularly where internal measures can improve the processes, is the most important step towards capacity building. The government should also take care of the basic needs of the soldiers who risk their lives for the country at borders and no politics should be played over soldiers' lives. With regards to the supersession, it has not happened for the first time and with time, the issue shall also be subsided. Overall, the army has to brace itself for many challenges and thus it should be well prepared and well-supplied with all the necessities.

Connecting the dots:

- The Army Chief faces daunting tasks ahead of him in maintaining the health of army. Critically evaluate.

Treating soldiers right

In news: A BSF soldier deployed at LoC brought forth a video of poor quality of food supplied to soldiers at borders. Is it a onetime incident or is there a pattern?

The need of spotlight

- The video was picked up by media and there was a public outcry at the plight of Indian soldiers.
- The allegations of the soldier, which also included corruption in supply of food by the senior officers, was taken at face value by the government as well as BSF and have initiated a further probe into the matter.
- Now, if the allegations are true, those responsible will be identified and punished. If the trail leads to systematic abuse and corruption in the supply of rations to frontline soldiers of the BSF, it is expected to be identified and rooted out.
- However, it will take time to fix as this requires clean up of the system from top to bottom and immediate quick fixes are not the solution.
- Similar more videos from paramilitary forces have also emerged which talk about the hardships faced. This shows that India's paramilitary forces are facing tough challenges not related to their duty which can adversely affect their physical and mental capacity.

The Indian security forces

- The over one million-strong paramilitary forces are the backbone of India's internal security. Along with the Indian Army, they are the guardians of India's lengthy, dangerous and inhospitable borders.
- The scope of work of the BSF, the ITBP, the SSB to stand guard over India's borders ranges from Kashmir and Ladakh to Rann of Kutch, from the Sunderbans to the thick jungles of the Northeast.
- The CRPF battle Naxals in India's heartland whereas CISF guard India's vital infrastructure. The RPF guards Indian railways and the NSG performs a crack anti-terror and VIP protection role.
- Thus, the role of these security forces are hybrid in nature and they derive their organisational and administrative structure from army and police.
- Barring the CRPF and the RPF, all the other forces are the creation of an independent, democratic India, in response to specific needs.
- **CRPF- Central Reserve Police Force**
 - CRPF is largest of India's Central Armed Police Forces and is under aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Its primary role is to assist State/Union Territories in police operations to maintain law and order and counter insurgency. Now it is involved in other duties such as security arrangements during elections, deployment in UN Mission etc.
 - It came into existence as Crown Representative's Police on 27 July 1939.
 - Post independence, it became the Central Reserve Police Force on enactment of the CRPF Act in 1949.
 - In 2008 a wing called Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) was added to the CRPF to counter the Naxalite movement.
- **RPF- Railway Protection Force**
 - It is entrusted with protection of railway passengers, passenger area and railway property of the Indian Railways.
 - It is the only central armed police force which has the power to arrest, investigate and prosecute criminals.
 - Origin traced back to 1855 when East India Company had deployed a contingent for the security of the railway with the owner companies bearing their upkeep.
 - On the recommendation of Railway Police Committee, 1872, Railway Police was organized into 'Govt. Police' for Law enforcement.
 - The 'Company Police' evolved into present RPF in 1957 passing through "Watch and Ward" phase from 1872-1954.
 - In 1957, a Railway Protection Force Act was enacted by the Parliament and Railway Security Force was renamed as Railway Protection Force.
- **BSF- Border Security Force**
 - It is charged with guarding India's land border during peacetime and preventing transnational crime. It is one of the forces of CAPF and was established in the wake of the 1965 War.

- From independence to 1965, India's international border was protected by local police belonging to each border state, managed by inter-state coordination.
- Under the aegis of MHA, its Director General is from IPS cadre inspite of it having its own cadre.
- It currently stands as the world's largest border guarding force. BSF has been termed as the ***First Line of Defence of Indian Territories***.

Where does the problem lie?

- The video of the soldier brings out three possibilities — either the quality of cooking is poor or quality of ration is poor or ration supplied is insufficient. All the three possibilities determine the agony faced by first line soldiers who have the right to healthy and sufficient food.
- If the incidence is seen in a macro perspective, there are larger issues raised beyond immediate concerns. The incident may be case of a general unprofessional neglect of welfare issues or systematic corruption by those responsible for procurement and distribution of rations.
- A soldier- whether on border or in jungles- requires healthy meal to sustain and satisfy its physical and mental need of food. If the basic right to eat is not healthy, it is difficult to upkeep the morale of the security forces with empty or upset stomachs.
- On the other hand in a reaction to the video, BSF stated that the soldier had a difficult past with incidences of absenteeism without permission, chronic alcoholism, misbehaving etc. Then it raises a question on BSF's leadership which posted such a soldier on critical location of India-Pakistan's border.
- Corruption in security forces have a critical possibility of denting country's defence capabilities. Putting responsibility of protecting the crucial borders on the soldiers who are indisciplined or habitual offenders affect the morale and attitude of fellow soldiers.

Not a healthy environment

- Currently, the COAS is in charge of issues related to operational preparedness and modernisation of the Indian Army, development of military logistics infrastructure, pay and allowances of officers and soldiers, OROP, etc. Thus, it is imperative to allow him to concentrate on his job rather than attending to less important issues.
- Similarly, Lt. Gen. Praveen Bakshi is commanding the Eastern Command and looking after the defence of territories bordering China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh and Lt. Gen PM Hariz is looking after India's border with Pakistan and commands one of the largest geographical areas in our country.
- These commanders command lakhs of troops and under the present circumstances, it will be unfair to drag these organisations and the officers into controversies.
- Moreover, taking support of social media site can be dangerous as it is a double edged sword as rightly called by the COAS. Expression of grievances is important for the forces, but they have to be done within limits given the fact that all uniformed personnel are

restricted by law and hence social media cannot become the primary platform for airing these complaints.

What needs to be done?

- These organisations protect India's borders and should not be shown in negative light. If any issues come up, they need to be highlighted and proper remedial measures be taken through grievance redressal mechanism but not stretch them beyond a point.
- The facts need to be verified before highlighting. Fake or unnecessary news may deviate the security organisations from their task and thereby affecting their working capacity and morale.
- The security organisations have to be less sensitive to criticism. They should look into the issues highlighted and investigate them impartially to solve the issues. They should refrain from commenting on each and every news pertaining to their criticism and rather initiate a probe into it.
- The centre has decided to set up a new mechanism to solve soldiers' grievances which is another step in providing support to soldiers to express their genuine problems and register their complaints. A formal channel shall give support and solution as against informal videos which will be forgotten soon enough.

Conclusion

Ethics in armed forces is as much as important as it is in other organisations. The security forces are not mohalla sabhas and hence are bound by discipline, hierarchy and loyalty. The army, paramilitary and CPFs are working overtime to ensure a peaceful and secure living for its citizens. They have enough operational and administrative problems to resolve in their own domains. Smaller and solvable issues should not take larger than required image. If the current case of BSF jawan was an isolated one or not will be established by the impartial inquiry which has to approach grievance redressal with an open mind. The proliferation of media into sensitive nature of armed forces have to be protected but when it comes to any violations of human well-being, it should be looked into from a non-partial view. This will bring in more confidence amongst the forces as well as people.

Connecting the dots:

- What are central armed police force? What the challenges faced by it and suggest measures to address them.
- The security organisations face twin challenges- external and internal. Comment.

ENVIRONMENT

Traditional solutions to solve water crisis

- If water is not managed well now, by 2030, global demand for water is expected to exceed sustainable resources by 40%.
- The World Bank estimates that water scarcity will be further worsened by climate change and by 2050 it could cause a 6% decline in the GDP of some countries.
- Thus, water scarcity provides greatest cause for a paradigm shift in the global economy in how natural resources are used.
- In the world, Asia is the real epicentre of this accelerating water crisis where the per capita availability of fresh water is 2,816 cubic meters, less than half the global average of 6,079 cubic meters.

India and water

- Though it is surrounded by water on three sides, it is facing acute water shortages in majority of its regions throughout the year barring monsoon season (if the rains are good).
- The hot climate is drying up lakes and rivers, while rapid urbanisation and water pollution are putting enormous pressure on the quantity and quality of surface and ground water.
- In spite of modern technologies available, the agricultural system still depends primarily on rainfall. It has been recently observed how a bad monsoon season can wreck havoc on the national economy.

Hence, it is now needed to revisit the past where water management was community led and water stress was never translated into water scarcity, despite lack of rainfall.

Turning to traditional water management systems

- India had a rich heritage of elaborate traditional technologies and modes of social organisation that ensured adequate and reliable supply of water even in arid regions.
- Here, dire water scarcity did not lead to fierce competition, but rather in having most intense and creative forms of cooperation.
- This further led to give three dimensional result — sustained eco-systems, creation of sustainable local economies and support to social norms and technical skills.
- But today, many of these old community-based systems of watershed management and storage have declined as water is transformed from a sacred gift to just a 'resource' that could be privatised and/or controlled by governments.

Basis of water management

1. **Storing every drop of rain water** where it falls in ways that sustain the larger eco-system instead of building economic systems that depend on exogenous waters for either survival or economic growth.
2. Creating water management systems as per the **inherent dynamic of the specific ecosystem**.
3. **Cultivation of social norms and cultural practices** rather than state policies enforced through policing. This will ensure sustainable agriculture and production systems across generations.

But today, the traditional systems are considered 'incompatible' with the modern society because it could support only subsistence economies and are not conducive to 'growth'. However, these have been untrue arguments as water scarcity brought innovation in preserving water and not water-fights.

Some well known traditional water management techniques are:

- Jhalara- they are stepwells which collect the subterranean seepage of an upstream reservoir or a lake.
- Talab/Bandi- Natural or manmade reservoirs that store water for household consumption and drinking purposes
- Taanka- it is a store water for household consumption and drinking purposes where rainwater from rooftops, courtyards or artificially prepared catchments flows into underground pit.
- Johads- are small earthen check dams that capture and store rainwater.
- Kunds- saucer-shaped catchment area that gently slope towards the central circular underground well.
- Baoli- secular stepwell structures from which everyone could draw water. Baolis on trade routes were often frequented as resting places.
- Kuhls- Surface water channels found in the mountainous regions where they carry glacial waters from rivers and streams into the fields.
- Bamboo drip irrigation- an ingenious system of efficient water management that has been practised for over two centuries in northeast India. Here, water from perennial springs is diverted to the terrace fields using varying sizes and shapes of bamboo pipes.
- Eri (Tank) system- Eri acts as flood-control system, prevent soil erosion and wastage of runoff during periods of heavy rainfall, and also recharge the groundwater.

These methods are tried and tested, simple and eco-friendly for most part and still currently used by many communities in different parts of India.

Conclusion

Though local watershed management is supported by government policy, it tends to be overwhelmed by large projects that add more directly to GDP growth. This should however not deter water soldiers to stop waging war against water-misusers. Over the last quarter of a century, a wide variety of civil society and academic interventions in India have attempted

to revive the traditional systems on which premodern societies based their relationship with water.

Policies and laws must ensure that the public and private sectors together map the wider impacts of water use on the environment. Policy should be built upon the findings of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) report on how to “decouple” water and GDP growth. This means that ways should be found for economy to grow without a corresponding increase in pressure on environment.

Government, private sector, civil societies and local communities must work together through a participatory decision making method to nurture a futuristic systems of water management where water is an equitable shared entity despite its scarce nature. The traditional water management system provide means to secure water in ever looming threat of water crisis, which can be modified as per existing environment.

Connecting the dots:

- Water conservation is another name for conservation of ecosystem. In light of the statement, critically examine if traditional water management systems can be used in modern times.

Climate Change – Impact and Innovations

Introduction

Climate change is a phenomenon which is often related to natural disasters such as heat wave, floods and cyclones. However, other than these disasters, climate change is bound to have many other effects as well. These effects might lead to a crisis which will have many more ill consequences in the long run.

Occurrences due to Changing Climate

Over the past few years various natural changes that have been witnessed due to climate change are:

- Rising sea levels,
- Changing weather patterns,
- Rising temperatures across the globe, and
- Decreasing water resources

Impact of Climate Change

- Changes in urban and rural landscapes in the long term are expected due to rising sea levels, changing weather patterns and decreasing water resources.
- The World Bank has predicted an impact on multiple sectors of the economy such as food, energy and water due to rising temperatures.

- Extreme heat due to changing temperatures and changing rainfall pattern has been witnessed in India over the years. The agricultural sector is expected to suffer a lot due to these issues.
- Sea level rise is also expected to impact coastal ecosystems and degrade the quality of groundwater.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Climate change is not only going to impact the environment or the society but will have a deep impact on the economy also.

- Even if rise in temperature is controlled within the target of 2°C, still India will have to import double the food grains as it used to do in the times when no climate change and its impact was visible.
- The problem of climate change has an impact on the GDP also. It would cost the world 1-2 per cent of the global GDP a year to reduce greenhouse emissions. Further if this problem is totally ignored, it would cost 5-20 per cent of the global GDP.

Strategy for Climate Change

For tackling climate change in the long run, there is a need to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from various sectors of the economy in a comprehensive manner and move to a low-carbon economy.

- Innovative financing opportunities and strategies should be adopted by existing and new businesses. Achieving the targets under India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) will need new kinds of financial innovations to mobilise trillions of funds meet those targets.
- Green Bonds are the latest form of investment innovation for funding climate mitigation strategies. YES Bank issued India's first green infrastructure bonds.
- Financial instruments such as Blue Bonds have been conceptualised for water, agriculture and related infrastructure. These financial instruments need to be given a push through adequate mechanisms such as credit guarantees. This will make them customer friendly and also assist in reaching huge numbers.
- Blending of resources can also help in creating a requisite impact and scale essential for combating climate change. This can be done through public private partnerships.
- Traditional irrigation methods and instruments, like bawdis and tankas used for water conservation have to be used along with modern irrigation techniques like drip and sprinklers that use less water for irrigation.

Indian Initiatives

India has set steep target of achieving a renewable energy installed capacity of 175 GW by 2022. India's energy goals have received a lot of support from developers and financiers. Various initiatives undertaken in India are:

- Partial Risk Guarantee Fund for Energy Efficiency and Partial Risk Sharing Facility which aims to boost support for promotion of this concept in the industry through the Energy Services Companies model.
- India's target of carbon sink under the INDCs will be supported by National Green Highways Mission under which the corporates are encouraged to adopt highways and work towards their greenery.
- Other than the Green Bonds, YES Bank also became the first private institution to commit CSR funds towards creation of carbon sink.

Schemes and targets like these give the private and public sector major opportunity to collaborate and finance climate mitigation.

Connecting the dots

- What is Climate Change? Discuss the socio-economic impact of climate change and also suggest innovative strategies for India to adopt for climate mitigation and adaptation.

