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Lead Story

Transformational Shift in Delivery of Services

Indian history is replete with instances of Governments who were extremely conscious of their duty to provide services to their citizens. Continuous efforts were made by them to set up systems of good governance through various schemes and laws. These systems were however largely based on records, files and transactions which were generally physical. It has been only in recent years that the concept of citizen centric e- Services has come to the fore.

Citizen centric e-Services aim to digitally empower the society and transform the economy. They aim to restyle how citizens avail of services and participate in the economy using less cash, opting instead for UPI, internet banking, direct benefit transfer, digital payment platform etc., using unique identification techniques, like Aadhaar, so as to drive financial inclusion with minimum lapses and delays. Government push towards a Paper-less, Presence less and Cashless model of e-governance and the launch of Aadhaar, UPI and BHIM have transformed the economy. Banking is fast moving from branch banking to a virtual world of banking called Digital Banking.

Various new citizen centric and transformational digital platforms that have been developed include BHIM-UPI, e-NAM, GSTN, Digi Locker, GeM, e-Hospital, MyGov, UMANG, SWAYAM, Jeevan Pramaan, NSP etc. These efforts are heavily dependent upon the efficient use of technology and as a result technology is increasingly being used to transform learning, economy and citizen services delivery mechanisms. The reach of mobile network, internet and electricity is expanding its reach to remote areas, thereby ensuring that the marginalised sections of the society are also brought into the mainstream. This digital transformation is facilitating the ease of access for citizens with disabilities as well and empowering them to access various products and services despite mobility constraints.

In the field of education too, technology is playing a greater role than ever before and is transforming classrooms from being isolated units of learning to more collaborative and communicative spaces with digital pedagogies, critical enquiry and demographic spaces that go beyond geographical constraints. Likewise, to minimise farmers distress, digitalising of farming systems and creating a database is also a step towards achieving sustainable agricultural production. The delivery of services to citizens in an efficient, transparent and effective manner has been addressed by the Geographic Information System as a decision support system for developmental planning.

Article 1. Amended RTI vs Participatory Democracy

The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament recently undermines the institution of the Central Information Commission (CIC).

The manner in which it was introduced without following the pre-legislative consultation policy creates serious doubts.

Features of RTI Act, 2005

The RTI Act, 2005 empowers the citizen to question the secrecy and abuse of power practiced in governance.

It is through the information commissions at the central and state levels that access to such information is provided.

This information can be regarded as a public good, for it is relevant to the interests of citizens and is a crucial pillar for the functioning of a transparent and vibrant democracy.

Recent amendment and concern over hinderance in the implementation of RTI Act

The RTI (Amendment) Bill, 2019 amends Sections 13, 15 and 27 of the RTI Act, 2005 to empower the central government to prescribe through rules the tenure, salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the chief and other information commissioners at the central and state levels.

This would undermine the autonomy and independence of the institution of the information commissions.

This would have serious implications for the credibility of the institution of the information commissioner in the future, which is crucial for removing information asymmetries between the citizen and the state.

The degree of transparency in governance would serve multiple purposes and interests of the society.

People as crucial part of democracy

The people are at the center of politics, and not the rulers and leaders.

Vigilant citizens can actively access information so as to ensure the clean democratic functioning of public institutions.

The RTI offers them an opportunity to contribute to a robust democracy.

The access to information about policies, decisions and actions of the government that affect the lives of citizens is an instrument to ensure accountability.

The Supreme Court has, in several judgments, held that the RTI is a fundamental right flowing from Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution, which guarantee to citizens the freedom of speech and expression and the right to life, respectively.

Investigative journalism has used RTI as a tool to unearth the truth.

Importance of RTI

Using the RTI Act, people have sought information to expose corruption, human rights violations, and wrongdoings by the state.

The RTI emerged through mass movement, and its continuance and deepening would also hinge on its use as a form of collective action to ensure accountability.

There have been several instances of the spontaneous use of the RTI by individual citizens (apart from social movements), which only goes to validate the spirit of the RTI.

Conclusion

Every year, around six million applications are filed under the RTI Act, these applications seek information on a range of issues, from holding the government accountable for delivery of basic rights and entitlements to questioning the highest offices of the country thus RTI is the most extensively used sunshine legislation globally and it's our duty to keep this sunshine without any eclipse.

[Keynotes/Keywords from Article:](#)

The article is emphasizing on importance of RTI and provisions of RTI Act 2005.

You must note down the recent amendments in the act.

The above article links democracy and importance of RTI in it.



ASSIGNMENTS

Question for Mains:

Information is a public good in democracy. Discuss

- You need to emphasize on how RTI makes democracy more substantive rather than procedural.
- Use keyword “public good” and answer on how RTI has all the properties of a public good.
- Google “public good” for better clarity.

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding RTI Act:

- i). Only a Citizen of India can Request for information.
- ii). No fees will be charged from people living below poverty line for the information.
- iii). Recent amendments empower the central government to prescribe terms of service of chief and other information Commissioners.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) (i) & (ii) only.
- b) (ii) & (iii) only.
- c) (i) & (iii) only.
- d) all of the above.

Ans- D

Explanation: RTI Act was passed in 2005 and amended for the first time in 2019. The amendments allow Central government to notify the term of office including salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of service for CIC and ICs at central and state levels.

Article 2. Parched Present, Parched Future

Water scarcity and heatwaves have been prominent in large parts of the country which have been reeling under a drought-like situation.

Effect of Heat waves and water stress on India

Heat waves killed hundreds and the accompanying water scarcity accentuated the vulnerability and crisis situation this year.

In cities like Chennai and Ranchi, water stress led to violent clashes and distress.

The lakes and reservoirs dried up and people had to fight and fend for water for their everyday needs.

Reasons for “groundwater drought” like situation in India

India is a country that is guzzling its groundwater at a rate unmatched by any other and is not treated as a public good.

Delay in monsoon and poor rainfall.

Lowering water tables across the country.

Even eastern India, which is considered as “water-affluent,” is staring at a future with groundwater drought.

Unequal access to water across India

There is an inherent inequality in distribution and a failure to share water judiciously.

It is evident in megacities like Delhi and Mumbai where access depends on income and social status.

In Chennai, while apartment buildings could afford to pay for three or four tankers per day, low income households could not during the crisis situation. This city has lost over 350 lakes.

Market is playing an important role in determining the cost and beneficiaries.

Among rural households, only 18% are said to have access to piped water.

Small farmers are worse off and are forced to take their lives or migrate in drought conditions.

Cities in India thrive on the water brought from far away locations at a high cost and with loss involved in transmission.

They have ignored the maintenance of structures like tanks.

Challenges

The expansion of cities fails to consider the access to water and to mandate provisions like harvest rainwater, and reuse, recycle and treat wastewater.

The real estate boom has promoted the tanker lobby and increased water extraction, along with usurping of the floodplains and the green cover.

Encroachment on the “land” retrieved after levelling water bodies, has led to reduced storage and seepage of water, and aggravates flood situations.

The quality of water that is discharged by the cities and the industries remains contaminated, leading to an estimated two lakh deaths in a year.

Most of the farming close to cities is being done using the untreated wastewater, which contains heavy metals and toxic chemicals, further compromising public health.

The present water crisis has encouraged comparisons with the “day zero” situation of Cape Town.

Such projections also create a situation of panic, and a push to “solutions” which will worsen the situation.

The interlinking of rivers, pushed for despite evidence of poor functioning of existing hydro projects, will only spell disaster and more conflicts.

Opportunities

It is required to move towards:

Water-prudent crops and lifestyles,

Augmented storage and regulation of the usage of water and policies that take into account the inequalities in access, and

Real time data of its consumption.

Also, water bodies in their healthy and natural state have the ability to replenish themselves along with a capacity to contain the intensity of climate crisis.



Keynotes/keywords

Article gives you complete picture about water crisis of India.

Note down data like, among rural households, only 18% are said to have access to piped water.

Assignment

Question for Mains:

The present-day water crisis is result of misuse and skewed distribution of water. Discuss.

- Simple question.
- Highlight water crisis in infographic.
- Then discuss both key words “misuse” and “skewed distribution”
- Use way forward in conclusion.

MCQ

Q. Select the incorrect the statement?

a) Intensive irrigation should he avoided in areas susceptible to water logging.

b) Extensive irrigation should be adopted in arid areas

c) Lift irrigation increases water logging.

d) all of the above.

Ans-C

Explanation: Lift irrigation is a method of irrigation in which water is not transported by natural flow, (as in gravity-fed canal) but is lifted with pumps or surge pools etc. The advantage of lift irrigation is the minimal land acquisition problem and low water losses. The lift irrigation scheme is instrumental in stabilizing agriculture production particularly in the years of droughts and increase food production as water is available whenever it is required and thereby increase in income level.

Article 3. EMPOWERING CITIZENS THROUGH E- SERVICES

The Digital India Programme was launched in 2015 for ensuring digital access, digital inclusion, bridging the digital divide and digital empowerment.

It is leading to India's transformation into a knowledge-based economy and a digitally empowered society. It has ensured citizen participation and empowerment with the technology that is sustainable.

India is among the top countries that have digital adoption momentum. Presently, digital transformation of India is on an exponential growth path and aiming towards a trillion-dollar digital economy by 2025.

Strategic Steps Taken by Govt. to Realize Trillion-Dollar Economy Potential

Aadhaar has provided a cradle to grave digital identity. Aadhaar-enabled DigiLocker is enabling paperless governance by providing public documents to citizens digitally and facilitating consent-based data sharing for availing services.

Aadhaar-enabled payment system (AEPS) facilitates banking services and digital payment.

Aadhaar is the largest de-duplication mechanism for government schemes in the country.

The coverage of Aadhaar (123 crore), Jan Dhan Yojana (36 crore) and mobile connections (118 crore) has moulded the digital profile of India.

Jan Dhan Yojana has provided financial inclusion to unbanked people and thereby, it has enabled banking, pension (PMSBY and PMJJBY) and insurance (Atal Pension Yojana) services to common citizens. Mobile has also accelerated the accessibility of government services in rural hinterland.

Digital delivery of services has been strengthened with the help of Common Services Centres (CACs). It provides digital access to over 350 services especially in rural areas at an affordable cost.

These centres have also led to empowerment of marginalized sections of the society by creating jobs for over 12 lakh people and by promoting rural entrepreneurs including women VLEs.

CSCs have also undertaken Stree Swabhiman initiative to create awareness about menstrual health and have set up over 204 sanitary pad units.

Digital India has resulted into a remarkable shift from project-based approach to

platform- based approach.

Some of the important citizen centric initiatives of Digital India programme are:

DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER

Enables transfer of government benefits directly to the bank account of beneficiaries.

Led to the integration of 440 schemes and the disbursement of INR 7, 33,981 crores, resulting in saving of INR 1, 41,677 crores.

The number of transactions for financial year 2019-20 alone, stands at 21 crores.

DIGI LOCKER

Enables paperless governance by providing private space on public cloud to citizens for storing their public and private documents.

352+ crore documents are available at DigiLocker.

200+ Types of documents are available

UMANG

Provides one mobile app for availing government services through backend integration with several government applications and database.

362 Services are made available from 73 departments and 18 States

E-HOSPITAL

Facilitates automation in hospitals through 20+modules of Hospitals Management Information System, namely patient registration, IPD Pharmacy, Blood bank, etc.

322 hospitals are integrated with e-hospital

e-NAM

Integrated 585 Agricultural Mandis across 16 states and 2 union territories

SWAYAM

A massive online open courses (MOOCs) platform, it offers more than 2000+ programmer categories.

Allows credits to students on the completion of course. The credit is recognized by Universities.

National Scholarship Portal

Provides facility of multiple scholarship schemes through a single online portal and includes application submission from students, verification by School

Administration, approval by authorities and disbursal through DBT.

20 scholarship schemes stand integrated.

PMGDISHA

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan has been started with an aim to make at least one person per family digitally literate.

Target is to train 6 crore persons in rural areas.

India BPO Scheme

A unique initiative to incentivize BPO employment in smaller towns (Tier 2/3 towns) that cover 108 cities and approved 276 units.

GeM

An ecommerce platform for public procurement of common use goods and services

For the first time, many sellers from small towns are participating in public procurement due to end-to-end automation.

Digital Payment

Many innovative digital payment tools, namely BHIM-UPI, BHIM-Aadhaar, BHARAT QR Code, National Electronic Toll Collection etc., have been implemented

Jeevan Pramaan

Facilities pensioners to submit their life certificate digitally from anywhere, anytime basis.

Courts Mission Mode Project

Promotes automation in Courts including Supreme Court, High Court, District Courts Complexes

National Judicial Data Grid is also implemented which analyses the data gathered from all integrated courts and shows all India figures through dashboard.

My Gov

Facilitates participatory governance in the country by providing a common digital platform where citizens can share their views on government programmes and schemes.

Statistics

As per the data from Electronics Transaction Aggregation and Analysis Layer

(eTAAL), the portfolio of electronic services has grown to 3,702 and an average number of electronic transactions on a daily basis (till April 2019) is around 9.5 crore.

This signifies that the benefits of Digital India have percolated down to a large section of the society.

The BPO movement for smaller towns is facilitating balanced job opportunities. As of now 222 BPO units' cities and 27 States and UTs.

Under the Digital India programme, India has witnessed a steep growth in mobile manufacturing units.

From just 2 units of mobile phones manufacturing in 2014, 268 units of mobile phone and accessories are now operational in India.

Restructuring of Digital India

Digital India is getting restructured and revamped to raise its bar and, in this direction, several new and innovative schemes have been planned.

Some of the major planned initiatives are India Enterprise Architecture (Idea), National Programme on Artificial Intelligence, open API platform, On Click consent driven address change in all public databases, Meity Startup Hub and GIS based decision support system for Districts, etc.,

IndEA aims to offer one government experience by establishing the best-in-class architectural governance, processes and practices with optional utilization of ICT infrastructure and applications.

A National Software Product Mission is planned to implement National policy on software products-2019 that inter-alia includes nurturing 10,000 technology startups in software products industry and up skilling's of 1,000,000 IT professionals.

National programme on AI has been designed with priority mission areas, namely Healthcare, Agriculture, Education, smart cities, Transportation, Cyber security energy, finance and Indian Languages.

This programme will be implemented in a hub and spoke model, wherein the proposed National Centre on Artificial Intelligence will act as the hub and Centres of Excellence (CoEs) along with startups will act as spokes. CoEs will facilitates startups industry and deployment of AI based solutions and will aid Research and Academic institutions in the applied research.

Meity Startups Hub (MSH) has been set-up under the aegis of ministry of Electronics and IT to promote technology innovation, startups and creation of

Intellectual Properties.

MSH will become a one-stop solution for all technology startups in the country. It will also facilitate Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE 2.0) that includes coverage of 51 incubators and 20000 tech startups.

MeitY has recently released “INDIA TRILLION DOLLAR DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY” report to boost the scale, scope and digital innovation of citizen centric services which can result in a quantum jumping digital contribution to the Indian economy USD 1 Trillion by 2025. Nine specific areas have been identified for government intervention.

These are: i) Doubling farmers’ income; ii) Make in digital India, make for India, Make for world; iii) Jobs and skills for the future; iv) 21st century IT infrastructure & software capabilities; v) e-Governance of the future; vi) Healthcare for all; vii) Quality education for the future; viii) Energy for all; ix) Next generation financial services

Conclusion

India’s resonance towards digital technologies has now moved from the corridors of the empowered society and providing substantive benefits to the common masses, thus demonstrating the power of technology.

Govt is embracing changing landscape of technology & is committed to ensure state-of-the-art technology enabled citizen, welfare of society and for socio-economic development of the country.

[Keynotes/keywords](#)

It is a full-fledged article on Digital India.

You must save it for future reference.

Important for both prelims and mains.

Assignments

Topic for essay:

India a knowledge-based economy and digitally empowered society: a possible transformation.

- Use whole article and attempt this essay.
- Get essay checked by a faculty or use peer group.

MCQ

Q. Which of the following are correctly matched?

- 1) Umang - one mobile app for availing govt services.
- 2) Swayam - a massive online open courses (MOOCs) platform.
- 3) Jeevan Pramaan - facilities pensioners to submit their life certificate digitally.

Choose the correct option-

- a) 1 only.
- b) 1 and 2 only.
- c) 2 and 3 only.
- d) all of the above.

Ans-D

Explanation: UMANG provides one mobile app for availing government services through backend integration with several government applications and database.

SWAYAM- A massive online open courses (MOOCs) platform, it offers more than 2000+ programme categories. It allows credits to students on the completion of course. The credit is recognized by Universities.

Jeevan Pramaan- Facilities pensioners to submit their life certificate digitally from anywhere, anytime basis.

Article 4. LESS CASH INDIA: VISION TO REALITY

The dominance of cash in Indian society has been primarily due three reasons: -

Lack of payment acceptance infrastructure.

Bank accounts perceived as account for saving rather than accounts for payments by a majority of the population.

Cash based payments seem to be zero cost and hassle-free as cost of cash is distributed and invisible.

Statistics

Till November 2016, only 15 lakh merchants had been enabled with PoS by over 40 banks. This meant that only 2.5% of India's 6 crore merchants had an option of receiving payments through cards.

This changed dramatically with the advent of QR code based payments. Today, there are over 1.2 crore merchants having QR code who give an option to their customers, to pay through their wallet or bank account. The QR code based payment have been attractive to merchants as it does not have traditional costs associated with PoS terminals- cost of PoS terminal, cost of maintaining internet, maintenance of PoS terminal, high MDR etc.

India has over 100 crore-bank accounts with over 90 crore-debit cards. The number of customers using bank accounts for digital payments is less than 5 crores. Many people find payment through bank accounts cumbersome and/ or risky.

Cash vs Digital Payment

Cash has an inherent benefit of being universally accepted and instantly usable. However, there is a cost of cash in the form of expensive cash management infrastructure.

Transitioning to digital payments will lead to significant reduction in costs due to inefficiencies associated with cash. Further cash is anonymous and leaves no trace visible in the system. On the other hand, Digital payment leaves a footprint across the ecosystem and is traceable.

In P2M (person to merchants) digital payments there is a central neutral party which facilitates arbitration and provides a channel for dispute resolution with merchants. On the other hand, cash is a bilateral transaction between a customer and a merchant.

In addition, while on-boarding merchants on digital payment platform due diligence is undertaken as per the requirements of the Indian Government. This greatly removes fraud/spurious merchants.

Towards Financial Inclusion

Government of India envisions financial inclusion of all sections of the society.

The four key elements of financial inclusion are: payments, credit, investments and insurance; and technology (Jan dhan, aadhaar, mobile) has ushered a digital revolution ensuring that marginalized sections of the society are also brought into financial mainstream.

In order to promote security of online transaction Indian Government has mandated use of 2 factor authentication for all payment methods. The 2 factors authentication essential involves a customer to “know something” like his username and password as well as “have something” like OTP received on mobile phone.

With regard to security of digital transaction there are two aspects: one is the technology aspect and the other is financial literacy of users. With emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning it has become safer to do digital payments.

With regard to financial literacy, the Indian Government has undertaken several campaigns in this regard.

Way Forward

While discussing digital payments, user privacy is of paramount importance. The banking and financial services industry is eagerly awaiting the passage of Personal Data Protection Bill.

This Bill sets out how the personal data of individuals is processed by the Government and private entities incorporated in India and abroad.

The Supreme Court of India while delivering its judgement on the constitutional validity of Aadhaar on 26th September 2018, also asked the Government of India to bring in a robust law for data protection at the earliest.

The Indian Government should encourage innovation in digital payments. There should be a push for increasing digital payments acceptance infrastructure.

The entities in the digital payments space should be given freedom to enable

merchants to accept digital payments in whatever way they deem fit.

Conclusion

The key to propagating digital payments is to ensure trust in the system both from the customer as well as the merchant.

The banking and financial services industry under the guidance of the Indian Government has taken several measures to build trust and a lot more needs to be done.

Assignment

Question for Mains

What is a QR Code? How Bharat QR is unique? How does it help in bringing less cash economy?

Three questions are there.

Answer all of them separately.

Use infographic to make logic of BHARAT QR clear.

Other points are available in article only.

MCQ

Q. Which of the following is not true regarding Financial Inclusion Plan?

Roland and simplified KYC forms for account opening.

Mandatory branches in unbanked villages.

BSBDA Accounts with minimum balance criteria.

Micro branches to be opened in rural area that can be operated by Business Correspondents.

Ans-C

Explanation: Financial Inclusion Plan is the RBI designed financial inclusion measures to be implemented by commercial banks to provide banking services in unbanked villages. The FIP broadly include self-set targets in respect of rural brick and- mortar branches opened; BCs (Business Correspondents) employed; coverage of unbanked villages with a population above 2,000 as also other unbanked villages with population below 2,000 through branches; BCs and other modes; no-frills accounts opened, including through BC-ICT (Business Correspondent using Information and Communication Technology); KCCs (Kisan Credit Cards) and GCCs (General Credit Cards) issued; and other specific products designed by them to cater to the financially excluded segments.

Article 5. NON-FARM SECTOR IN INDIA

India has been traditionally an agrarian country. Besides having traditional sources of income such as -agriculture, traditional handlooms and handicrafts of India like weaving, pottery, etc. - development in then on-farm sectors of rural India is slowly taking place.

Rural Non-Farm Sector

The Rural Non-Farm Sector (RNFS) encompasses all non-agriculture activities: mining and quarrying, household and non-household manufacturing, processing, etc.

Need for Rural Non-Farm Sector

Over the years, the economic contribution of agriculture to India's GDP is steadily declining.

As per the tenth agricultural census, the average size of agriculture landholding[®] declined to 1.08hectare in 2015-16 from 1.15 hectare in 2010-11.

This explains the rise of employment in non-farm sector. It is observed that 64 per cent of rural employment is in the agriculture sector, while the share of agriculture in rural output is 39 per cent.

Hence, reducing the dependence of rural masses on agriculture as a source of income will help improve the overall income of the rural population.

Non-Farm Job Status: Statistics

According to different international studies on India's labour market, between 2011 and 2015, the number of agriculture jobs fell by 26 million while non-farm ones rose by 33 million.

The top four sectors contributing to the non-farm jobs between financial years 2011 and 2015 are Trade and Hospitality (15.6 per cent), Construction (14.3 per cent), Transport (5.7 per cent) and Education and Health (1.6 per cent).

Development of RNFS

In order to develop Rural Non-Farm Economy, heavy investments are needed for inclusive, sustainable and diversified rural development along with the right governance system. For proper implementation of same, the government of India has introduced a large number of schemes over the years to diversify the rural

population into non-farm activities.
These are:

[Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act \(MGNREGA\):](#)

Starting off in 2005, this scheme intended to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled manual work.

[Deendayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana:](#)

According to census 2011, India has 55 million potential workers between the ages of 15 and 35 years in rural areas. At the same time, the world is expected to face a shortage of 57 million workers by 2020. This presents a historic opportunity for India to transform its demographic surplus into a demographic dividend.

The Ministry of Rural Development implements DDU-GKY to drive this national agenda for inclusive growth, by developing skills and productive capacity of the rural youth from poor families.

There are several challenges preventing India's rural poor from competing in the modern market, such as the lack of formal education and marketable skills.

DDU-GKY bridges this gap by funding training projects benchmarked to global standards, with an emphasis on placement, retention, career progression and foreign placement.

[DeenDayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission:](#)

It seeks to reach out to 8-9 crores rural poor households and organize one-woman member from each household into affinity-based women SHGs and federations at village level and at higher levels.

[Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana \(AGEY\):](#)

The government of India has launched a new sub scheme named "Aajeevika Gramen Express Yojana (AGEY)" as part of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). The Self-Help Groups under DAY-NRLM will operate road transport service in backward areas. This will help to provide safe, affordable and community-monitored rural transport services to connect remote villages with the key services and amenities for the overall economic development of backward rural areas. This will also provide an additional

avenue of livelihoods for SHGs.

Development of Rural Tourism:

The Union Government, in the Budget Speech of 2014-15 decide to create tourist circuits around specific themes. Besides, Ministry of Tourism is promoting Farm Tourism as niche products and is also encouraging Home Stay Facilities in rural areas.

Strength in Rural Non-Farm Sectors:

The introduction of JAM Trinity – Jan Dhan, Aadhar and Mobile has increased the share of total disbursement of money in the non-farm sectors.

This is in addition to the existing financial institutions like Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), State Khadi Boards, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) etc., which have helped in the development of agro-industries, domestic marketing channels for rural non-farm production as well as government support in export promotion.

Challenges in Rural Non-Farm Sectors

Infrastructure: The most significant bottleneck is the quantity, quality and reliable of infrastructure.

Regulatory restriction on small sectors:

In the initial stages, capital investment restrictions were imposed to protect the small-scale sector, from predation by large industry.

Reservation of products for the sector was initiated to create a domestic market and quantities restrictions imposed to protect them from competition from imports.

Capital investment limits have discouraged economies of scale, and concessions offered to small industry have created adverse incentives against re-investment.

Reservation of products for the small-scale sector has gradually reduced in significance.

The decision of the government to put all the reserved items in the open general license category from April 2005 meant free import of such items at the prevailing tariff rate.

With the latter slated to come down over time to around 20 per cent as per the WTO norms, this will effectively signal the end of protection for the small-scale industry.

Education and Awareness: High levels of illiteracy in rural India have hampered the

growth of the rural non-farm sector.

Migration of skilled laborers from rural to urban regions also creates shortfall of workforce in the rural small-scale industries.

Conclusion:

With increased urbanization and decrease in the agriculture land, Non-Farm Sector in rural India is gradually gathering momentum.

This is supported by the implementation of different schemes of the union government like Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, etc.

More livelihood and poverty alleviation programmes will bring in more participation in the nonfarm activities, thus reducing the dependence on agriculture.

Question for Mains

Our villages can become engines of growth but for this Non-Farm Sector in rural India must gather momentum. Explain.

All the information needed is present in the article.

Just beware that while giving importance to non-farm sector don't end up criticising the farm sector.

MCQs

Q. Consider the following statements about Deen Dayal Upadhaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana-

- 1) It is placement linked skill training programme exclusively for rural girls.
- 2) It aims to convert India's demographic surplus in to a demographic dividend.
- 3) It is a generational poverty alleviation programme.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1only.
- b) 1and 2 only.
- c) 1and 3 only.
- d) None of the above.
- e) Ans-A
- f) Explanation: Features of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana-
- g) -Enable Poor and Marginalized to Access Benefits
- h) -Mandatory coverage of socially disadvantaged groups (SC/ST 50%; Minority 15%; Women 33%)
- i) -Pioneers in providing incentives for job retention, career progression and foreign placements Greater Support for Placed Candidates
- j) -Post-placement support, migration support and alumni network
- k) -Guaranteed Placement for at least 75% trained candidates
- l) -Greater emphasis on projects for poor rural youth in Jammu and Kashmir (HIMAYAT), The North-East region and 27 Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) districts (ROSHINI)

Article 6. SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (GRAMIN): TRANSLATING MISSION INTO MILESTONE

Swachh Bharat Mission was launched on October 2, 2014 on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti to achieve "Clean India" by 2019.

It has got a Nation-wide acceptance and has mobilized masses and public-private sector corporations alike. The Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin has become a people's movement, through which a sense of responsibility among the people towards Clean India was evoked.

The mission is a community-led movement focused on building toilets and educating people about the importance of sanitation and cleanliness.

Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin

Sanitation is not only about building toilets but also includes safe management and appropriate disposal of waste. The concept includes a planned approach towards dealing behavior issues, providing proper infrastructure and coming up with appropriate policies and delivery of services which helps in safe sanitation.

The rural sanitation had been a concern ever since the first rural sanitation program was introduced in 1954 as part of the First Five Year Plan. But the growth had been slow.

Finally, the government recognized that the sanitation problem is not limited to inadequate infrastructure, but is seeped deep in minds and behavior.

Thus, to attain better sanitation, Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) was launched focusing on 'transforming and changing behaviors in rural India.'

The SBM-G is administered by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS).

Overview of Rural Sanitation- Achievement (2014-19)

According to the recent data except Odisha, Goa, Telangana and West Bengal, all the other states had been covered 100 percent by individual Household Latrines.

99.86 percent people now have toilet facility in their premises. In addition, 5,50,295 villages, 2,46,146 Gram Panchayats, 602 districts and 28 states are declared as ODF.

Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin plays a crucial role in improving the situation of sanitation and is making a significant impact on public health.

Funding SBM-G

The funding for SBM-G is provided by Central and State Government and Swachh Bharat Kosh wholesome funding comes through multilateral agencies.

The Swachh Bharat Kosh has been established to collect and mobilize funds from non-governmental agencies and corporate sectors.

Social and Economic Impact of SBM-G

According to a study conducted in 2017 by UNICEF, average household in ODF villages, accrued over 50,000 per year; there was a probably increase of Rs. 19,000. In other words, the total benefit bagged by household exceeded the cost by 4.7 times.

It is hard to measure the intangible benefits of SBM-G campaign but the impact on the dignity of both nation and individual is remarkable.

It strengthens the safety of women girls and children and increases their workforce participation because of better health and hygiene.

Due to decline in open defecation, the overall health situation improved resulting in great substantial reduction in the medical expenses and a drop-in mortality.

According to WHO, attainment of 100 percent toilet coverage would prevent 3 lakh deaths due to various waterborne diseases.

The biggest achievement of the mission has become 'making sanitation everyone's business'.

Sustainable Concerns and Future Strategy

Just building a toilet is not enough; it also needs to be maintained. There should be water availability and proper knowledge about waste disposal in order to maintain the toilets.

Sanitation campaigns need to be organized regularly in order to educate the people the hygienic use of toilets and economic use of water.

People look forward for good quality latrine suiting to their requirement. So, to promote defecation free environment government should make the provision for interest free loan to these beneficiaries.

Recognizing efforts through appreciation and awards to various social workers, villages, Gram Panchayats, Blocks and districts could build long term investment

towards promoting sanitation awareness.

Conclusion

A better and healthier tomorrow is not only the government responsibility but also a collective duty to be equally shared between the citizens and government.

The outcome and achievement of sanitation initiatives should not be assessed only in terms of number of toilets constructed but should ensure that there is proper and regular use of it and thus, leading to cleanliness and hygiene in the mind.

Keywords and Keynote from the article

Save the article as you will have all what you required on this topic.

Assignments

Question for mains

Sanitation is not only about building toilets but also includes safe management and appropriate disposal of waste. Discuss.

You can start the answer with quote of Gandhiji on cleanliness.

Relate quote with SBM.

Elaborate how it constructed toilets but still 50% not using them.

Same is the case with dustbin.

Elaborate on focusing on behavior change.

MCQ

Q6. Consider the following statements about Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)

The nirmal Bharat Abhiyan has been restructured in to Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)

It will be implemented by Ministry of Rural development. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

1only.

2only.

Both 1 and 2

Neither 1nor 2. Ans-C

Explanation: Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) (2014): NBA was replaced by Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) (SBM-G) which is a sub-mission under Swachh Bharat Mission. SBM-G also includes the key components of the earlier sanitation schemes such as the funding for the construction of individual household toilets, construction of community sanitary complexes, waste management, and IEC

Article 7. FOOD PROCESING FOR NON FARM SECTOR

Food processing sector in India plays an important role in linking Indian farmers to consumers in domestic as well as international markets.

During the last decade, food processing sector in India has grown significantly and moved from a situation of insufficiency to surplus in food production which is expected to be doubled in the next ten years.

For this reason, there is a prospect for huge investments in food and food processing activities.

Currently, India stands second in terms of global food production and has good status in producing numerous food products like milk, ginger, banana, guava, mango and papaya.

Food Processing Sector: Current Scenario

Major areas holding possibility for value-added processing are packaging, canning, frozen food, dairy, food processing and thermo-processing industries.

The food processing sector in India accounts for almost one – third of the total food market in India. The food processing sector is valued at 258 billion US dollars (USD), and it is the fifth largest sector domestically in terms of production, export and expected growth in the country.

It contributes to around 14 per cent of manufacturing GDP and 13 per cent of India 's total food exports.

The sector engages approximately 1.77. million people. Major industries constituting the food processing sector are grains, sugar, edible oils, beverages and dairy products.

As per Department of Industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), the food processing sector in India has received around 7.54 billion USD worth of FDI during the period April 2000-march 2017.

Further, Indian government aims to boost growth in the food processing sector by leveraging reforms such as 100 percent FDI in marketing of food products

Food processing for Livelihood sustainability

Food processing is an activity that changes the raw food stuff into a suitable form for marketing purpose. It is the major source of employment and income for rural areas and holds the key to reduction of waste in the fragile supply chain avoids food wastage and also helps in attaining food security.

Food processing sector primarily engages a major share of workers from the agriculture sector, who face disguised unemployment. Processed food occupies less space for storage and can be exported for foreign exchange. Growth in food processing sector will help in creating new employment opportunities, enhance agricultural yields, improve productivity and enhance the quality of standard of living of the people across the country, especially of rural people.

Well-developed Food Processing Sector: Need of the Hour

A well-developed food processing sector further helps in crop diversification, commercialization of agriculture, reduction of wastage, role in enhancing shelf life, improves value addition, ensures

better return to the farmers, promotes employment as well as creates markets for exports of agro foods. In the process, the farmers will be able to raise their own level of income and employment. The broader idea behind the food processing activities is to bring together farmers, processors and retailers and link agricultural production to the market so as to guarantee maximization of value addition, minimization of wastages and improving enhancing farmer's income.

Another important factor for the rising habits of processed food is the change in the food habits of the working class who prefer readily available convenient foods.

Government Initiatives for food Processing Sector

The Government of India through the Ministry of Food Processing Industries has also taken steps to boost investments in this sector through Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samapada Yojana (PMKSY).

Major activities covered under the Yojana are establishment of mega food parks, integrated cold chains and value addition infrastructure, expansion of food processing & preservation capacities, infrastructure for agro-processing, creation of backward and forward Linkages, food safety and quality assurance infrastructure, generation of human resources and Institutions.

Till now, the government has sanctioned 42 mega food parks to be set up in the country under the Mega Food Parks Scheme.

Government has identified food processing sector as one of the priority sectors under Make in India campaign.

Food and beverages companies are persistently exploring better ways to augment their sales and market share by the means of adding new products in markets as by modernizing more professional promotional campaigns.

It can be said that India has an advantage of huge agriculture land and this can help potentially to become an ideal sourcing destination for food products internationally.

Challenges and Way Forward

The key challenges identified overall for the food processing sector in India are capital intensive functions, poor supply chain linkages, infrastructure bottlenecks, lack of skilled manpower and low competition.

These challenges can be minimized by making awareness programmes related to food processing to rural farmers who are primarily engaged in agricultural activities, which in turn will help them to improve their livelihood mechanism and hence economic status.

Therefore, there is a need to frame such policies, which would focus on the involvement of rural farmers in this sector as they play an important role in management of Indian food ecosystem.

For prelims emphasis on government program for promoting food processing

Assignments

Question for Mains

Food processing sector can be single node for doubling farmers income, success of skill India and Make in India. Elaborate.

- Simple straight forward question.
- First establish current scenario of food processing industry.
- Then go for explain how food processing can be helpful for success of mentioned program.

MCQ

Q. Which of the following is an advantage of food processing?

- a) Availability of seasonal food throughout the year.
- b) Removal of toxins and preserving food for longer.
- c) Adds extra nutrients to some food items.
- d) all of the above.

Ans-D



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MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

INDIA'S WATER CRISIS

- There is a **downward trend in water levels in at least 71 of 91 reservoirs** across India according to data released by the Central Water Commission. The situation is particularly grim in the north-western region (Gujarat and Maharashtra) and in the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The cumulative water storage in 91 reservoirs plummeted to 29.189 BCM, which is just 18 per cent of the total capacity.
- Nearly 50 per cent of India grapples with drought-like conditions, yet the newly formed Jal Shakti Ministry's
- union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat termed the water shortage facing the country media hype.
- Last month Centre issued a "drought advisory" to Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, asking them to use water judiciously.
- About **42 per cent of India is 'abnormally dry'**. This is 6% more than last year,[®] according to the Drought Early Warning System.
- A report titled Status of trace and toxic metals in Indian rivers 2018 by Central Water Commission has highlighted that **42 rivers in India have at least two toxic heavy metals in quantities beyond the permissible limit.**
- A new study by researchers has found **widespread uranium contamination in groundwater from aquifers in 16 Indian states.**
- A September 2018 paper published jointly by the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indore and Guwahati says that **at least 133 of the 634 districts that the paper studied face drought almost every year**

Background

- *Water is a State subject. India is undergoing the worst water crisis in its history.*
- *The total water resource base for India is shown below:*
- More than 600 million people are facing acute water shortages.
- Critical groundwater resources accounting for 40% of water supply are being depleted at unsustainable rates.
- India (16% of global population) holds only 4% of world freshwater.
- Droughts are becoming more frequent, creating severe problems for India's rain-dependent farmers (~53% of agriculture in India is rain fed).

- When water is available, it is likely to be contaminated, resulting in nearly 200,000 deaths each year.
- Interstate disagreements are on the rise pointing to the fact that limited frameworks and institutions are in place for national water governance.
- World Bank indicates that by 2030 India's per capita water availability may shrink to half, which will push the country into „water scarce“ (annual per- capita water availability is less than 1000 cubic meters) category from the existing „water stress“ (annual per-capita water availability is less than 1700 cubic meters) category.
- With nearly 70% of water being contaminated, India is placed at 120th amongst 122 countries in the water quality index.
- 75% of households do not have drinking water on premise. 84% rural households do not have piped water access.
- India is the largest user of ground water in the world. About 80% of India's drinking water needs is dependent on groundwater

About Composite Water Index:

- Index evaluates states on nine broad sectors and 28 indicators.
- 14 of the 24 states scored below 50% on water management and have been classified as low performers.
- 21 Indian cities including Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad will run out of groundwater by 2020, affecting 100 million people.
- Annual per capita availability fell from 1,820 cubic meters in 2001 to 1,545 cubic meters in 2011.
- Underperformance of states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana poses significant water and food security risks.
- Many water-scarce states have performed better in the Index like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh.
- Groundwater, the source of 40 percent of India's water needs, is depleting at an unsustainable rate.
- If mitigation measures are not implemented, India faces a 6 percent loss in its gross domestic product by 2050, when the demand for water will exceed the supply.
- 54 percent of India's groundwater wells are declining.

Recommendations of Standing Committee on ground water:

- Creation of database on natural and artificial recharge of water.
- Study of Dark Blocks (over-exploited assessment units) should be initiated.
- Recommendations regarding ground water withdrawal for agriculture: (i) on-farm water

management techniques and adoption of improved irrigation methods, (ii) implementation of „Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Ground Water“, and

Revamping agricultural power pricing structure.

- Water should be brought under concurrent list of the Constitution.
- A Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Ground Water needs to be created.
- Synergy between MGNREGS and ground water management.
- Census of water bodies and installation of water meters on tube wells needs to be undertaken. Ministry of Water Resources in coordination with Central Pollution Control Board should devise an effective mechanism to identify critically polluted areas located in dark blocks.
- Enforcement of No Objection Certificates by Central Ground Water Authority.

Central Ground Water Authority guidelines for ground water extraction:

- Introduction of the concept of Water Conservation Fee.
- Encouraging use of recycled and treated sewage water by industries.
- Provision of action against polluting industries, and measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects.
- Mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders.
- Mandatory water audit by specified industries abstracting ground water.
- Mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries.
- Monthly water level data shall be submitted to CGWA through the web portal.

Model Bill for the Conservation, Protection, Regulation and Management of Groundwater features:

- Right to water for life.
- Common pool resource: Groundwater would not be a free resource; even paid use will be allowed in a sustainable manner ensuring equitable availability to all.
- Principle of subsidiarity: More say to end-users of water, Panchayats and local bodies.
- Top priority in the use of groundwater ought to be in meeting drinking, sanitation, food security, sustenance agriculture, needs of women and only after that for industry.
- There would also be groundwater security boards and groundwater protection zones that would be overseen by State bodies.

Draft National Water Framework Bill 2016:

- It aims to decentralize water management and give more power to panchayats to decide how water can be better used.
- It promises to give every person the right to a minimum amount of safe water.
- Further the state is obliged to protect and conserve water.
- A graded pricing system for domestic water supply should be introduced.
- It asks governments to strive for rejuvenation of river systems by ensuring Aviral Dhara, Nirmal Dhara, and Swachh Kinara.

How India can manage its water resources?

- Usage of efficient irrigation methods.
- Implementation of an urban water policy to harvest rainwater in Indian cities and regulate groundwater usage.
- Increasing the water recycling capacity.
- Performance around groundwater augmentation can significantly improve with the strengthening of groundwater regulations and strict implementation on the ground. Steps such as improvement of monitoring network and continuous monitoring of groundwater level and groundwater quality, strict implementation of rainwater harvesting and continuous operation and maintenance of the same will also help states manage their groundwater better.

Good initiatives taken by certain states:

- Community Managed Water Supply Programme (Gujarat)
- Bhagirath Krishak Abhiyan (Madhya Pradesh)
- Data for groundwater management (Andhra Pradesh)
- Reviving ancient system of maintaining and managing water bodies by local communities themselves such as Jhalaras in Rajasthan.
- Pricing of Irrigation Water as advocated by the Vaidyanathan Committee.
- Water Literacy Movement.
- Surplus water from one year can be stored locally in an unconfined aquifer, withdrawn in subsequent years by the banker and transferred to supplement the water resources of the client when needed.
- Water treatment: Using Green remediation techniques such as Phytol extraction and Chemical and biological treatment for industrial discharge along with establishment of common effluent treatment facilities for smaller industr

DRAFT NEW EDUCATION POLICY

- The Committee led by Dr. Kasturirangan submitted the Draft National Educational Policy to the Union Human Resource Development Ministry (MHRD).
- Education falls under the Constitution's concurrent list of subjects that can be legislated upon by both the Centre and states.
- The extant National Policy on Education, 1986 modified in 1992 required changes to meet the contemporary and futuristic needs of our large youth population.
- The new policy involved an unprecedented collaborative, multi-stakeholder, multi-pronged, bottom up people-centric, inclusive, participatory consultation process

.Salient features of the draft policy:

- It is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability.
- It has proposed to rename **MHRD as Ministry of Education**.
- In School Education, a major reconfiguration of curricular and pedagogical structure with Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral part of school education is proposed.
- The Committee also recommends Extension of Right to Education Act 2009 to cover children of ages 3 to 18. A **5+3+3+4 curricular** and pedagogical structure based on cognitive and socio-emotional developmental stages of children: **Foundational Stage (age 3-8 years): 3 years of pre-primary plus Grades 1-2; Preparatory Stage (8- 11 years): Grades 3- 5; Middle Stage (11-14 years): Grades 6-8; Secondary Stage (14-18 years): Grades 9-12.**
- Schools will be re-organized into school complexes. It also seeks to reduce content load in school education curriculum.
- There will be no hard separation of learning areas in terms of curricular, co-curricular or extra- curricular areas.
- It promotes active pedagogy that will focus on the development of core capacities and life skills including 21st century skills.
- The Committee proposes for massive transformation in Teacher Education by shutting down substandard teacher education institutions and moving all teacher preparation/education programmes into large multidisciplinary universities/colleges.
- In higher education, a restructuring of higher education institutions with three types of higher education institutions is proposed-
- **Type 1: Focused on world-class research and high quality teaching;**
- **Type 2: Focused on high quality teaching across disciplines with significant contribution to research;**

- **Type 3: High quality teaching focused on undergraduate education.**
- This will be driven by two Missions –**Mission Nalanda & Mission Takshashila.**
- There will be re-structuring of Undergraduate programs of 3 or 4 years duration and having multiple exit and entry options.
- A new apex body **Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog** is proposed to enable a holistic and integrated implementation of all educational initiatives and programmatic interventions, and to coordinate efforts between the Centre and States.
- The National Research Foundation, an apex body is proposed for creating a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.

The four functions of Standard setting, Funding, Accreditation and Regulation to be separated and conducted by independent bodies

- National Higher Education Regulatory Authority as the only regulator for all higher education including professional education;
- Creation of accreditation eco-system led by revamped NAAC;
- Professional Standard Setting Bodies for each area of professional education;
- UGC to transform to Higher Education Grants Commission.
- The private and public institutions will be treated on par and education will remain a not for profit activity.
- Several new policy initiatives for promoting internationalization of higher education, strengthening quality open and distance learning, technology integration at all levels of education, adult and lifelong learning and initiatives to enhance participation of under-represented groups, and eliminate gender, social category and regional gaps in education outcomes are recommended.
- Promotion of Indian and Classical Languages and setting up three new National Institutes for Pali, Persian and Prakrit and an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) has been recommended.

Controversy on Three Language Formula:

- The earlier draft had suggested mandatory teaching of Hindi in such States.
- According to the draft, **“The study of three languages by students in Hindi-speaking States would continue to include Hindi and English and one of the modern languages from other parts of India, while the study of languages by students in non-Hindi speaking States would include the regional language, Hindi and English”.**
- Political parties in the South, particularly Tamil Nadu, had strongly opposed the three-language formula suggested alleging that it was tantamount to thrusting Hindi on non-Hindi speaking populations.
- HRD thereafter issued clarification that this is a draft Policy submitted by the Committee

and is placed for views of the general public. It is not the Policy announced by Government. Further, Government is committed for equal development and promotion of all Indian languages. There will be no imposition of any language in educational institutions, nor discrimination against any language.

- A new revised draft was released. The revised draft said: **“Since the modular board examinations for language proficiency will indeed test only for basic proficiency in each language, such a change in choice in Grade 6 would certainly be feasible if the student so desires and would in such cases be supported by teachers and the schooling system.”** It further said additional choices of languages will be offered in middle school to offer greater flexibility.
- Former ISRO **chief K Kasturirangan** clarified that there were no efforts to impose Hindi even as he dismissed reports of dissent against the removal of the Hindi clause. "We had two approved versions where one of them did not convey the spirit of the language policy as we wanted to give. We replaced it with the para that does not mention Hindi. There was never an intention to impose Hindi. The main difference between the education policy of 1968, 1986, 1992 and the present one is that the three-language formula is acceptable in the earlier ones, but there is flexibility in the new policy".
- Centre's decision to revise the draft education policy may pacify protestors in southern parts of the country, but the Opposition is not satisfied with the move. Almost all Opposition parties and members of the National Democratic Alliance questioned the Centre's alleged move. They said there was no need for adding such a sensitive issue in the policy.

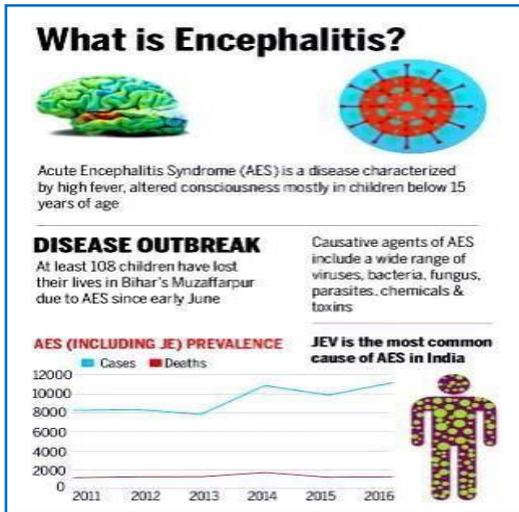
Challenges in implementation of the Draft Policy:

- **Funding:** Draft policy recommends doubling of public funding to **6% of the GDP** and increasing overall public expenditure on education to 20% from the current 10%. It does not appear to be feasible in the near future given that most of the additional funding has to come from the States.
- **RTE expansion:** Expanding coverage under the RTE Act to include pre-school children should perhaps have been introduced gradually keeping in mind the quality of infrastructure and teacher vacancies.
- Setting up the **Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog** is fraught with many administrative problems and possible turf battles.
- Regulation being brought under the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority, standard setting under the General Education Council and funding under the Higher Education Grants Council may require a revisit so that there is synchronisation with the current Bill for the Higher Education Commission of India.
- The draft policy is silent on the **Institutions of Eminence** and agencies like the **Higher Education Funding Agency**.
- Language issues have to be handled sensitively.
- The details about financing and institutional structures should be fleshed out at the earliest.

ACUTE ENCEPHALITIS SYNDROME

Context

- As many as 125 children have died and over 300 hospitalized in Bihar with symptoms of *Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES)*, while the government has been maintaining major deaths have been caused by hypoglycemia, condition of extremely low blood sugar and electrolyte imbalance.
- The popular terms like **Litchi Havoc, Chamki Bhukar, Killer Encephalitis, Deadly Litchi Toxin** that are being used to report the epidemic in Bihar point to the dismal methods of investigating a disease in India.
- AES is defined as a group of clinically similar neurologic manifestations caused by several different viruses, bacteria, fungus, parasites, chemicals or toxins etc. But experts have called AES a meaningless term given that any brain disease in the child may be called AES.
- AES is a term used casually by untrained health workers to say that a child has some brain disease like convulsion, unconsciousness etc. But when a doctor examines the child, he must conclude which kind of AES disease it is: encephalitis, meningitis, encephalopathy or cerebral malaria.
- The first AES case was recorded in 1995 in Muzaffarpur. There is no fixed pattern, but a year with high temperature and scanty rain usually witnesses high cases. There were 143 deaths in 2013 and 355 in 2014, which dropped to 11 in 2017 and 7 in 2018.
- Malnutrition is high in both states, and malnourished children are prone to infection. UP and Bihar together account for over 35% of child deaths in country. **National Family Health Survey-4 data show that in 2015-16, 48% children aged less than five in Bihar were stunted.** Heat, humidity, unhygienic conditions and malnutrition, unique to these areas, together contribute to the rise in AES. Incidence is higher in litchi fields around which malnourished children live.



SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Bodyache
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Vision impairment
- ▶ Hearing loss
- ▶ Paralysis
- ▶ Seizures
- ▶ Unconsciousness

TREATMENT

- ▶ Antiviral medication
- ▶ Anti-inflammatory drugs
- ▶ Bed rest
- ▶ Plenty of fluids

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- ▶ Take preventive vaccination
- ▶ Use repellents
- ▶ Wear long-sleeved clothes
- ▶ Wash hands before and after meals

Sources: Media reports, The national medical journal of India, Ministry of health and welfare

Causation factors

- There are two competing theories of the epidemic: one, caused by heat stroke, and two, caused by a toxin in locally- grown fruit, litchi.
- A member of the team that studied the epidemic in Muzaffarpur from 2011 to 2013 forwarded the litchi theory.
- Experts that identified the epidemic said that malnourished children who ate litchis and went to sleep without a meal fell ill in the pre-Monsoon season between 4 am to 7 am. This study formally established a relation between hypoglycemia or low blood sugar, found in children with poor nutrition who sleep hungry, and methylene cyclopropyl- glycine (MCPG), a toxic chemical found in litchis that affects the brain due to undernourishment.

Confusion

- Discrediting previously theories, some experts claim that deaths occurred due to acclimatization failure in children and instead were caused by environmental factors such as the heat wave and poor rainfall in the area.
- Refuting the litchi theory, they said that sick children also do not have symptoms of abdominal pain to prove the litchi theory.
- Some experts assess the problem at the intersection of economic welfare and health. According to them, deaths have had the same symptoms from the past two decades. Poor, malnourished children stay hungry and they pick up to eat anything they find in the gardens like litchis. Time-lapse factor or the time taken to reach a Primary Health Centers and at times the availability of treatment in them also is an issue to the poor.

What steps have been taken by government?

- The Bihar government introduced free vaccines at all primary health centers.
- The central and state governments have conducted awareness campaign since February asking people not to expose their children to sun, ensure a proper diet and increase fluid intake.
- In 2014, 74% of sick children were saved through a simple intervention — infusing 10% dextrose within four hours of the onset of illness.
- The recommended prevention strategy — making sure that no child goes to bed without eating a meal — adopted from 2015 ensured a sharp drop in the number of children falling sick.



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US-IRAN CRISIS

Context

- On June 21, US president Donald Trump called off a retaliatory military strike on Iran. Tensions between the United States and Iran have escalated after Iranian forces shot down a US surveillance drone on June 20.

Background

- The US and Iran are at loggerheads since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which witnessed the overthrow of the Shah, an American ally in the Middle East, and brought Iran under a clerical regime antagonistic to the US and its involvement in regional politics.
- US sanctions in the 1980s and 1990s were intended to check Iran's regional activities and compel it to cease support for terrorism.
- After the discovery of Iran's clandestine nuclear programme, the US focus shifted to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and thus further sanctions were put in place.
- Guided by prevailing foreign policy debates in the US on the need to pivot to Asia and cater for the larger strategic challenge posed by a rising China and get out of the quagmires in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama decided to recalibrate US policy towards the Middle East including Iran. As a result, in 2015, JCOPA was signed.
- The relations between US and Iran have been in troubled waters ever since US President Donald Trump assumed office in 2016.
- Trump had called Iran Nuclear deal as the worst deal ever negotiated during election campaign. In 2018, US pulled out of the agreement, calling it decaying and rotten.
- In April 2019, the US designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation.
- April 22: US announced that it would stop extending sanction waiver to nations importing Iranian oil.
- Iran had hit back by signaling that it might start part of its nuclear programme, as also stating that it will close the vital Strait of Hormuz for commercial shipping purposes.
- May 2019: sabotage on oil tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, and a drone attack on Saudi pipeline were blamed on Iran and its proxies.
- In retaliation, the US decided to put sanctions on Iran's supreme leader and send its warships and bombers to the region.

Recent happenings (June 2019)

- The downing of the US drone is just the latest in a series of provocations between the two nations.
- The US has also blamed Iran for explosions on two oil tankers on one of the world's most vital strategic shipping routes, the Strait of Hormuz, as well as on four commercial ships off the coast of the UAE.

Why the current impasse?

- Broadly, there are three contentious issues that led to the current impasse. First and foremost is the Iranian nuclear issue. Secondly, the US has raised serious concerns on Iran's missile programme. The third contentious issue is Iran's regional military expansionism and support for non-state actors.
- Iran wants its economy, crippled by sanctions, to improve. Iran's recent aggressions is seen as part of strategy to provoke the United States into action and to pressure American allies in Europe and Asia to reign in the world superpower and force the Trump administration back to the negotiating table. The strategy, however, carries significant risks: total collapse of the nuclear agreement and possibly war.

What if the conflict escalates?

- It may lead to full scale war with more and more nations joining either side.
- It will lead to down trends in global economy. Fuel prices would reach high points. Iran may block Strait of Hormuz which is a strategic choke point which in turn would affect global trade. Giant economy like India, China and Russia will suffer.

Response of the international community?

- US's European allies have kept their distance, but cautioned that additional US pressure on Iran might lead to Tehran repealing the nuclear agreement.

Indian scenario

- Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, visited New Delhi in May and discussed various bilateral and regional issues with Indian External Affairs Minister.
- Indian navy has deployed two warships to the Gulf of Oman amid rising tensions between the U.S. and Iran. Indian military aircraft are also conducting aerial surveillance in the area.
- India was Iran's second largest buyer last year, and Tehran was the third largest supplier of oil to India.
- US refused to renew the waiver issued for eight countries including India.
- This means that Indian companies will either have to stop buying oil from Iran or resort to a Rupee payment mechanism as was done in the past.

- According to media reports, as of May 2019, Indian oil companies have decided to not place further orders for oil imports from Iran due to US sanctions.
- Other than the oil sector, India is not directly affected by US sanctions on Iran though Indian companies involved in the Iranian automobile, iron & steel and mining sectors will be affected due to additional US sanctions on these sectors.
- It might not be difficult for India to meet the shortfall in crude oil imports due to US sanctions on Iran. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE and the US have publicly announced their willingness to help meet the shortfall in crude oil that India might face due to sanctions on Iran. Then there are countries such as Iraq, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Angola, Mexico, etc.
- The bigger challenge is the political aspect of managing relations with the US and Iran.

India has two options:

- One is to resort to buying Iranian oil through one or more informal arrangements like devising a Rupee payment mechanism or joining hands with the INSTEX mechanism
- Second is to continue negotiating with the US to either secure a formal waiver or to have an informal understanding to buy Iranian oil.
- In the meanwhile, India can offer to Iran to enhance its investments in the Chabahar Port development project as well as consider initiating other developmental and connectivity projects to strengthen linkages to Afghanistan, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
- This will help India not openly defy the US or subvert its policy towards Iran but also at the same time ensure that its relationship with Iran is not completely derailed and it is also able to pursue an independent foreign policy.

Conclusion

- Both sides are engaged in making risky moves, testing each other's resolve without knowing the limits, which raises the chances of a miscalculation.
- The only possible solution is renewed negotiations and all issues can only be solved in a peaceful way, through talks and agreements mediated by regional and global powers and allies.

ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

Context

- A committee will be formed by the Modi-led-government to prepare a roadmap for —One Nation, One Election
- . PM
- Modi stressed that this formula needs to be accepted even if it takes 10 years to achieve synchronization.
- Simultaneous Election entails elections to all the three tiers of the Constitutional institutions i.e. Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and Local bodies taking place in a synchronised manner. But number of 3rd tier is too large and conduct of election to the same is primarily a State subject. Therefore, it would be extremely challenging, if not impossible, to synchronise and align election schedules of third tier with that of the House of the People and State Legislative.

Background

- The need for having synchronised elections to the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies has been debated for long.
- The issue gained momentum with the matter coming into the limelight at various forums of the Government.
- If the history of elections in India is looked at, from 1951-1967, general elections to the House of the People and all the State Legislative Assemblies were held simultaneously. However this practice got disrupted after 1967, due to premature dissolution of some of the Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 and the House of the People in 1970.
- The main reason behind the synchronised elections till then was the dominance and rule by one National political party and the regional parties were not powerful and influential.
- The indiscriminate use of Article 356 of the Constitution also contributed to disruptions of simultaneous elections.
- However, with the change in Indian polity, the regional political parties not only have increased in number, but have also marked their presence in the elections to the concerned State Assemblies.
- At present, the scenario is that at least one part of the country is witnessing an election throughout any given year. Here, the example of Delhi is relevant, which witnessed two Assembly elections and one general election between 2013 and 2015. Similarly, in a span of three years (2014- 2016) the country witnessed one general election and 15 State Assembly elections.

Discussions available on simultaneous elections

- In 1983, the Election Commission of India in its First Annual Report recommended holding simultaneous elections for the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of States.
- The Law Commission of India in its 170th Report on –Reform of Electoral Laws (1999) recommended holding simultaneous elections as a part of electoral reforms.
- National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, 2002 suggested a viable course of action that could be adopted in case of Hung House in consonance with a constructive vote of no-confidence.
- In 2015, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 79th Report suggested to hold simultaneous elections for long term good governance.
- In January 2017, NITI Aayog prepared a working paper titled —Analysis of Simultaneous elections: the What, Why and How in which proposal to conduct elections to the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly, simultaneously was deliberated upon.
- President: Ram Nath Kovind: Frequent elections put on hold development programmes, disrupt normal public life and impact essential services and burden human resource with prolonged periods of election duty.

International Scenario:

- In South Africa elections are held for National Assembly, Provincial Legislature and Municipal Councils in a five-year cycle.
- Elections to Sweden’s County Councils and Municipal Councils occur simultaneously with the general elections.
- Elections for the Federal Parliament in Belgium are normally held every five years, coinciding with the European (and consequently also regional) elections.

Arguments in favour of Simultaneous elections

- Considerable savings on the colossal avoidable administrative and other expenditure incurred on account of holding of separate General elections.
- Substantial economy through revision of electoral rolls for the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies simultaneously instead of undertaking them on a countrywide basis twice over in two different operations.
- For the conduct of elections, civilian personnel running into about twenty-five lakhs of officers and staff and a few lakhs of police personnel are deployed every time for about two to three months thereby seriously affecting their normal duties.
- The policy paralysis that results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time.

- On account of the de-linking of the general elections to the House of the People from that of the State Legislative Assemblies, there is a duplication of the expenditure incurred by the candidates contesting elections and political parties which results in the pumping in of considerable resources, thereby indirectly affecting money supply in the economy.
- The dismantling of the temporary but complicated superstructure raised for the purpose of election by accretion of huge personnel is required to be done at the earliest and smoothly as of putting up the super-structure, and normal conditions should be restored quickly. In this respect also, simultaneous elections would be highly desirable.
- Impact on delivery of essential services: Holding of political rallies disrupts road traffic and also leads to noise pollution. If simultaneous elections are held, this period of disruption would be limited to a certain pre-determined period of time.

Arguments against Simultaneous elections

- Holding simultaneous elections will bring with it certain requirements as given below:
- Curtailment and extension of terms of the House of the People/ State Legislative Assemblies;
- Amendment to the relevant provisions of the Constitution
- Amendment to the Representation of People Act, 1951
- The ratification by the States to these Constitutional amendments.
- Once the elections are synchronized, it will be necessary to ensure that the synchronization continues and does not get disrupted. Disruption is likely to take place on the following grounds which need to be taken care of: No- Confidence Motion, Hung Parliament Assembly, Budgetary Defeat.
- It is also important to deal with the concept of remainder term of the House.
- In India, there is a great scarcity of resources and the area is quite large as well as population is vast so it would be quite difficult to control and govern all things at the same time.
- One Nation one election shouldn't be there as it will lead to centralization of power and decrease power of states. There will be no opposition and it can lead to monopoly of power in few hands. For the growth of a nation opposition parties are necessary to take a decision.
- People are not aware of one nation one election policy. People are habitual in giving votes in different elections.
- If all elections will be happened at the same time, it will be difficult to implement policies by election commissioner smoothly and there may be chances of some irregularities or malpractices which will be again challenged.
- If there is only one leader ruling the whole nation and if that particular party is corrupt then it can lead to adverse effect on the whole nation.

Law Commission had recently released a white paper on simultaneous elections.

- Some of the recommendations are:
- Definition of simultaneous elections may be added to Section 2 of the 1951 Act.
- Article 83 and 172 of the constitution along with sections 14 and 15 of the 1951 Act should be amended. This would mean that the new Lok Sabha and assembly, constituted after mid-term elections, shall be only for the remainder of the term.
- The Anti-defection Law laid down under paragraph 2(1) (b) of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution be removed as an exception to prevent stalemate in the Assembly due to Hung Parliament.
- Sections 14 & 15 of RPA, 1951, be amended to extend the statutory limit of 6 months for the issuance of notification of general elections to provide the flexibility to Election Commission in conducting the simultaneous elections.
- An alternative to premature dissolution of assembly due to no-confidence motion could be that the members while moving such an option may also put forward an option for forming an alternative government.
- Prime Minister/Chief Minister may be elected to lead the Lok Sabha Assembly, by full house like electing the speaker of the Lok Sabha, providing stability to the government.
- An amendment of the rule of no-confidence motion (Rule 198 of Rules and Conduct of Business of the Lok Sabha), on the lines of the German Constitution.

Recommendations of Parliamentary Panel:

- Elections of legislative assemblies whose term ends six months before/after the general elections to Lok Sabha should be clubbed together.
- Elections should be held in two phases. In 1st phase, elections to almost half of legislative assemblies should be held during the midterm of Lok Sabha and remaining elections should be held with the end of term of Lok Sabha.
- To hold early elections to state legislative assemblies along with other states/Lok Sabha, a motion for an early general election or a no confidence motion must be passed by the House.

Conclusion:

- The polity and the democratic set up in any country is prone to continuous change. This is specifically true in the case of India, which is uniquely placed, owing to its unity in diversity. In order to develop into a mature and a vibrant democracy, the quest for increasingly productive and positive changes in the overall set up of the country are inevitable.

G- 20 SUMMIT

Context

- 2019 G20 Summit was held in Osaka, Japan.
- The G20 Summit is formally known as the —Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economyll. The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest growing economies.
- G20 members cover for 85% of the world’s GDP, and two-thirds of its population.
- After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.
- Members; Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.
- Themes of G20 Summit: Global Economy, Trade and Investment, Innovation, Environment and Energy, Employment, Women’s Empowerment, Development, Health

Major highlights of summit declaration:

- **Global economy:** Reaffirmed commitment to use all policy tools to achieve strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, and safeguard against downside risks, by stepping up our dialogue and actions to enhance confidence.
- **Fostering robust economic growth**
- **Trade and investment:** Strive to realize a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep markets open. Reaffirm support for the necessary reform of the World Trade Organization.
- **Capacity:** ask relevant Ministers of the members of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity to explore and reach a consensus by fall 2019 on ways to further the work of the Forum.
- **Innovation:** Digitalization, Data Free Flow with Trust: will work toward achieving an inclusive, sustainable, safe, trustworthy and innovative society through digitalization and promoting the application of emerging technologies. Share the notion of a human-centered future society, which is being promoted by Japan as Society 5.0. To foster public trust and confidence in AI technologies and fully realize their potential, G20 commits to a human-centered approach to AI, and welcome the non-binding G20 AI Principles, drawn from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Recommendation on AI.
- Endorse the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment as common strategic direction and high aspiration.

- Global finance: reaffirm commitment to further strengthening the global financial safety net with a strong, quota- based, and adequately resourced International Monetary Fund at its center.
- **Corruption:** G20 remains committed to play a leading role in the global efforts to prevent and fight against corruption, as well as promoting integrity, by implementing the G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021 while strengthening synergies among related international instruments and mechanisms.
- **Creating a virtuous cycle of growth by addressing inequalities:** Labour and Employment, Women's
- Empowerment, Tourism, Agriculture.
- Realizing an inclusive and sustainable world: Development, Global Health, Global Environmental Issues and Challenges, Climate change, Energy, Environment, Displacement and migration.
- G20 also resolved to free internet of extremism.
- PM Modi presented 5-I Vision to maximize digital tech for social benefit. **The 5 'I's are:**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Indigenization**
- **Innovation**



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SCO SUMMIT

Context

- PM Modi attended his first (of his second term) multilateral summit at the 19th Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- PM Modi held bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the SCO leaders presented his vision for the organization in the form of HEALTH (healthcare cooperation, economic cooperation, alternate energy, literature and culture, terrorism-free society and humanitarian cooperation).

SCO

- Was founded in 1996 with five countries- **China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.**
- Primary purpose was to ensure stability along the borders.
- It was re-founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- Also known as Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic and security alliance.
- India and Pakistan became its members last year in Qingdao summit.
- India had been an observer of SCO meeting.
- Four observer-states, including Afghanistan, and six dialogue-partners, including Sri Lanka.
- It aims at building an equal partnership of unbalanced, multi-scale states with different economic and political potential, cultural and civilizational features via voluntary membership, equality of participants and a consensus based model of decision-making.

THE BISHKEK DECLARATION

- On terror, the declaration largely followed language from the Qingdao Summit declaration, reiterating SCO's condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- There was support for WTO and the multilateral trading system; and like other yearly declarations the members noted the need for increased cooperation between SCO member states in trade and services.
- A document regarding cooperation among members on Digitalization and Information and Communications Technology was signed at the end of heads of state meeting.
- India refused to join the clause in the declaration in support of the Belt and Road Initiative.

However, like the Qingdao Declaration of 2018, all the other SCO members reaffirmed their support for the Chinese initiative.

- On other issues of regional and international concern, Iran, Syria and Afghanistan found mention in the final document.
- The declaration called for consistent implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and asked all participants for comprehensive and effective implementation of the document.
- On Syria, the declaration noted the Astana format and the process of political settlement through the dialogue process. It also extended support to post-conflict restoration by different states in Syria.
- The Roadmap for Further Action of the SCO Afghanistan Contact Group was signed by the leaders and the declaration argued for an inclusive peace process conducted and led by Afghans themselves.



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INDO-US BILATERAL RELATIONS

Context

- PM Modi and President Trump met during the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan. Also, US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo recently visited India.

Background of India US relations

- India-U.S. bilateral relations have developed into a global strategic partnership, based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues.
- The relations are being strengthened under the motto: —Chalein Saath Saath: Forward Together We Go!, and
- "SanjhaPrayas, Sab kaVikas" (Shared Effort, Progress for All).
- The summit level joint statement issued in June 2016 called the India-U.S. Relationship a —Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century!.
- There have been regular high level exchanges; Ministerial 2 plus 2 dialogue; Defence cooperation- new framework in 2015, policy groups, Defence Trade and Technology Initiative, trade/ agreements, military cooperation; counter terrorism cooperation; homeland security dialogue; Trilateral dialogue and QUAD.
- US is India's largest trading partner in goods and services. The overall India-US bilateral trade in goods and services has increased from US\$126 billion in 2017 to US\$142 billion in 2018. This growing trend continues in the first four months of 2019, which has seen an increase in bilateral merchandise trade of 14% compared to the same period in 2018.

Recent strain in bilateral relations:

- US tariff increases made last year on steel and aluminum.
- The decision to withdraw India's GSP trade status.
- US Iran crisis and energy imports of India from Iran in that scenario.
- India's retaliatory tariffs and barriers like the 50-60% duties on motorcycles and cars and 150% duties on American liquor.
- Indian government decisions like data localization requirements and

new e-commerce regulations, pricing of medical devices.

Highlights of Pompeo visit:

- He held meetings with Indian PM and Minister of External Affairs.
- Pompeo: "Great friends are bound to have disagreements. The United States seeks greater market access and the removal of trade barriers in the economic relationship." "And, I address these differences in the spirit of friendship and I think that the both India and US will be able to see a good outcome for each other".
- Delhi first announced plans to impose new tariffs a year ago in retaliation for increased US import duties on Indian steel and aluminum. But it repeatedly delayed them while the two sides held a series of trade talks.
- Contentious issues discussed: US withdrawal of GSP to India, US tariffs on steel and Aluminum and India's tariffs in retaliation, Iran crisis and impact on Indian energy imports, India's \$5 billion deal with Russian for a new air defense system.
- Pompeo's visit just days ahead of the G20 Summit in Japan also set the stage for bilateral talks between Trump and Modi in Osaka.

Highlights of Modi Trump meeting:

- US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have directed their officials to meet in the coming days to resolve the thorny issues that have cropped up in trade ties between the two countries.
- The two leaders exchanged views on Trade, Defense, Iran and the tensions in the Gulf region and also discussed introduction of 5G technology for wireless communications.
- Trump: India-US ties had never been closer.
- Iran: On Iran, the two sides agreed to remain in touch to ensure that the situation in the region remained stable. Besides issues regarding peace and stability in the region, Modi outlined India's energy concerns and said Iran supplied as much as 11% of India's energy needs. A large number of Indians reside in the region and there were economic interests as well. The prime minister also noted that India had dispatched two of its naval ships to the region for the protection of Indian flagged vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

- 5G: Modi told Trump that it was a new area in communication that provided opportunity for collaboration between India and the US. The billion Indian users and India's capacity in technology development and start-ups and design and Silicon Valley and its role in development of 5G technology for mutual benefit were discussed.
- Trade: It was agreed that trade ministers of both countries would meet at an early date and sort out the contentious issues relating to market access, trade barriers and the trade imbalance. The prime minister referred to the withdrawal of special export privileges accorded by the US to India and the retaliatory step taken by India to impose duties on 28 items the US exported to India as something that had already happened and that they should now look forward and see how to resolve some of the issues.

