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INDEX

General Studies -II

1. Export Incentives.
2. India Rankings 2021.
3. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2021.
4. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Auto Industry and Drone Industry.
5. Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity.
6. Global Innovation Index 2021.
7. State Food Safety Index.
8. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
9. Medical Device Parks.
10. Financial Stability and Development Council.

General Studies III

1. Improved water management system.
2. Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP).
3. Minimum Support Prices (MSP).
4. Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD).
5. Hybodont Shark From Jurassics.
6. Low carbon bricks.
7. Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs).
8. Blue straggler.
9. Eastern Economic Forum 2021.

Foreign Affairs

Short Liners

GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-II

Export Incentives

Why in News

- Government of India has decided to budget Rs 56,027 crore in this Financial Year FY 21-22 itself in order to disburse all pending export incentives due to exporters.
- This amount includes claims relating to MEIS, SEIS, RoSL, RoSCTL, other scrip based schemes relating to earlier policies and the remission support for RoDTEP and RoSCTL for exports made in the 4th quarter of FY 20-21.
- Benefits would be disbursed to more than 45,000 exporters, out of which about 98% are small exporters in the MSME category.

Background

- Exports in India have seen robust growth in recent months.
 - a. Merchandise exports for April-August, 2021 was nearly \$164 billion, which is an increase of 67% over 2020-21 and 23% over 2019-20.
- This decision to clear all pending export incentives within this financial year, will lead to even more rapid export growth in coming months.

How can it be claimed?

- Export claims relating to earlier years will need to be filed by the exporters by 31st December 2021 beyond which they will become time barred.
 - o The Online IT portal will be enabled shortly to accept MEIS and other script-based applications and would be integrated with a robust mechanism set up by Ministry of Finance to monitor provisioning and disbursement of the export incentives under a budgetary framework.
 - o A decision to clear all pending export incentives within this Financial Year itself despite other budgetary commitments arising out of the pandemic is with the objective of providing timely and crucial support to this vital pillar of Indian economy.

Brief Details and Benefits of the Steps taken

- For merchandise exports, all sectors covered under MEIS, such as Pharmaceuticals, Iron and steel, Engineering, Chemicals, Fisheries, Agriculture and allied Sectors, Auto and Auto Components would be able to claim benefits for exports made in earlier years.
- Benefits would help such sectors to maintain cash flows and meet export demand in international market, which is recovering fast this financial year.
- Service sector exporters, including those in the travel, tourism and hospitality segments will be able to claim SEIS benefits for FY 2019-2020, for which Rs 2,061 crore has been provisioned.
 - o The SEIS for FY 2019-20 with certain revisions in service categories and rates is being notified.
 - o This support would have a multiplier effect and spur employment generation.
- The apparel sector, which is a major labour-intensive sector, would get past arrears under ROSCTL and ROSL, and all stakeholders in the interconnected supply chains would be strengthened to meet the festive season demand in international markets.

About the Arrear

- The amount of Rs 56,027 crores of arrears is for different export promotion and remission schemes:
 - a. MEIS (Rs 33,010 crore).
 - b. SEIS (Rs 10,002 crore)
 - c. RoSCTL (Rs 5,286 cr).
 - d. RoSL (Rs 330 crore).
 - e. RoDTEP (Rs 2,568 crore).
 - f. Other legacy Schemes like Target Plus etc. (Rs 4,831 crore).
- This amount is over and above duty remission amount of Rs 12,454 crore for the RoDTEP scheme and Rs 6,946 crore for RoSCTL scheme already announced for exports made in this year i.e. FY 2021-22.

Conclusion

- Benefits would help the export sectors to maintain cash flows and meet export demand in international market.
- This support would have a multiplier effect and spur employment generation.

India Rankings 2021

Why in News

- Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan has recently released the India Rankings 2021 instituted by the *National Institutional Ranking Framework*.
- This robust & a role model ranking framework will serve as India's contribution to the global learning landscape.

Background

- This is the sixth consecutive edition of India Rankings of HEIs in India.
- During its maiden year in 2016, rankings were announced for University category as well as for three domain-specific rankings, namely Engineering, Management and Pharmacy institutions.
- Over the period of six years, three new categories and five new subject domains were added to bring the total tally to
 - a. **Four categories** : Overall, University, College and Research Institutions
 - b. **Seven subjects**: Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Architecture, Medical, Law and Dental in 2021.
- Research institutions have been ranked for the first time in India Rankings 2021.

About India Rankings 2021

- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), launched in November 2015 by the Ministry of Education, was used for this edition as well as for the past five editions of India Rankings released for the years 2016 to 2021.

| Sl No | Parameter | Marks | Weightage |
|-------|------------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| 01 | Teaching, Learning & Resources | 100 | 0.30 |
| 02 | Research and Professional Practice | 100 | 0.30 |
| 03 | Graduation Outcomes | 100 | 0.20 |
| 04 | Outreach and Inclusivity | 100 | 0.10 |
| 05 | Perception | 100 | 0.10 |

- Ranks are assigned based on total sum of marks assigned for each of these five broad groups of parameters.
- In addition to parameters used for Overall category, the following two additional sub-parameters were included in methodology developed afresh for ranking institutions under "Research Institutions":
 - Research Papers published in journals covered in the *First Quartile of Journal Citation Report (JCRQ1)*.
 - H Index.
- Besides, sourcing data on various parameters from applicant institutions, third party sources of data have also been used, wherever possible.
 - Scopus (Elsevier Science) and Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics) were used for retrieving publications and citations data. Derwent Innovation was used for retrieving data on patents.
 - Data retrieved from these sources was shared with the institutions for transparency with a provision to give their inputs.

Brief Details

- A total number of 4030 unique institutions offered themselves for ranking under "Overall", category-specific and/or domain-specific rankings for India Rankings 2021.
- Number of unique applicants to India Rankings have increased from 2426 in 2016 to 4030 in 2021 whereas total number of applications for ranking in various categories have increased from 3565 in 2016, to 6272 in 2021 i.e. total increase of 1604 (66% increase) in unique institutions and 2707 (76% increase) in total applicants.
- 200 institutions are ranked in engineering discipline, 100 each in Overall, University and College categories, 75 each in Management and Pharmacy, 50 each in Medical and Research Institutions, 40 in Dental, 30 in Law, and 25 in Architecture. Additional rankings are suitably bunched in Rank Bands of 101-150 and 151-200 in case of Overall, University and College and 201-250 and 251-300 in case of Engineering.

- o *Indian Institute of Technology Madras* retains 1st Position in Overall Category as well as in Engineering for the third consecutive year.
- o *Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru* tops the University as well as Research Institution category introduced for the first time in India Rankings 2021.
- o *IIM Ahmedabad* tops in Management subject and *All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi* occupies the top slot in Medical for the fourth consecutive year.
- o *Jamia Hamdard* tops the list in Pharmacy subject for the third consecutive year.
- o *Miranda College* retains 1st position amongst colleges for the fifth consecutive year.
- o *IIT Roorkee* takes the top slot for the first time in Architecture subject displacing *IIT Kharagpur*.
- o *National Law School of India University, Bangalore* retains its first position for in Law for the fourth consecutive years.
- o Colleges in Delhi dominate ranking of colleges with five colleges out of first 10 colleges from Delhi.
- o *Manipal College of Dental Sciences, Manipal*, secure 1st position in "Dental" category.

Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2021

Why in News

- The Minister of State, Jal Shakti Ministry, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel has recently presided over the e-launch of Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2021 under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase -II.
 - o The event organized by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS).
- The Minister of State, JalShakti also released the SSG 2021 Protocol document; SSG 2021 Dashboard and the mobile App for Citizens feedback at the launch event.

Background

- India achieved the massive challenge of ODF declaration of all villages in mission mode in five years (2014-19).
- The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) will undertake Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2021 countrywide to support acceleration of ODF Plus interventions and increase momentum for improving ODF Sustainability as well as Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) activities across the villages in the country.
 - o DDWS had commissioned Swachh Survekshan Grameen (SSG) on two occasions earlier in 2018 and 2019.

Brief Details

- As part of the Survekshan, Villages, Districts and States would be ranked using key parameters.
 - a. 17,475 villages in 698 Districts across India will be covered. 87,250 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these 17,475 villages will be visited for survey.
 - b. Around 174750 Households will be interviewed for their feedback on SBM related issues.
 - c. Also, citizens will be mobilized to provide feedback on sanitation relation related issues online using an application developed for the purpose.
 - d. A detailed protocol has been developed to guide the ranking of Districts basis their performance on key qualitative and quantitative parameters.
- The weightage to different elements of the SSG 2021 are as below:
 - a. Direct Observation of sanitation in villages including HHs/public places -30%
 - b. Citizen's Feedback including feedback from common citizens, key influencers at the village level and from citizens online using a mobile App -35%.
 - c. Service Level Progress on sanitation related parameters -35%
- In line with the Swachh Bharat Mission phase II program, SSG 2021 would focus on assessing ODF Sustainability & Implementation of ODF Plus in the villages.
- Many new elements have been added in the SSG 2021. These elements include –
 - o Assessment of Solid, Liquid.
 - o Plastic Waste & faecal Sludge Management Arrangements.
 - o Awareness on Menstrual Hygiene and Management & Disposal Arrangements for Menstrual Waste.

Conclusion

- The primary objective of SSG is not merely a ranking exercise but it has been an important vehicle for creating a Janandolan (people's movement) and ensuring prompt action for achievement of programme elements.

- SSG also fostered a spirit of healthy competition among villages to improve their service delivery to citizens, towards creating cleaner.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Auto Industry and Drone Industry

Why in News

- The Union Government has approved the PLI Scheme for Automobile Industry and Drone Industry with a budgetary outlay of Rs. 26,058 crore.
 - The PLI scheme for the auto sector will incentivize high value Advanced Automotive Technology vehicles and products.
 - It will herald a new age in higher technology, more efficient and green automotive manufacturing.

Background

- PLI Scheme for Automobile Industry and Drone Industry is part of the overall announcement of PLI Schemes for 13 sectors made earlier during the Union Budget 2021-22, with an outlay of ₹ 1.97 lakh crore.
- With the announcement of PLI Schemes for 13 sectors, minimum additional production in India is expected to be around ₹ 37.5 lakh crore over 5 years and minimum expected additional employment over 5 years is nearly 1 crore.

Objective

- The PLI Scheme for the auto sector envisages to overcome the cost disabilities to the industry for manufacture of Advanced Automotive Technology products in India.
- The incentive structure will encourage industry to make fresh investments for indigenous global supply chain of Advanced Automotive Technology products.
- It is estimated that over a period of five years, the PLI Scheme for Automobile and Auto Components Industry will lead to fresh investment of over ₹ 42,500 crore, incremental production of over ₹ 2.3 lakh crore and will create additional employment opportunities of over 7.5 lakh jobs.
 - Further this will increase India's share in global automotive trade.

About the Schemes

- The PLI Scheme for auto sector is open to existing automotive companies as well as new investors who are currently not in automobile or auto component manufacturing business.
- The scheme has two components viz Champion OEM Incentive Scheme and Component Champion Incentive Scheme.**
- The **Champion OEM Incentive scheme** is a 'sales value linked' scheme, applicable on Battery Electric Vehicles and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles of all segments.
- The **Component Champion Incentive scheme** is a 'sales value linked' scheme, applicable on Advanced Automotive Technology components of vehicles, Completely Knocked Down (CKD)/ Semi Knocked Down (SKD) kits, Vehicle aggregates of 2-Wheelers, 3-Wheelers, passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and tractors etc.
- The PLI Scheme for the Drones and Drone components industry addresses the strategic, tactical and operational uses of this revolutionary technology.
- A product specific PLI scheme for drones with clear revenue targets and focus on domestic value addition is key to building capacity and making these key drivers of India's growth strategy.
- The PLI for Drones and Drone components industry, will over a period of three years, lead to investments worth Rs. 5,000 Crore, increase in eligible sales of ₹ 1500 crore and create additional employment of about 10,000 jobs.

Conclusion

- This PLI Scheme for automotive sector along with the already launched PLI scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) (₹ 18,100 crore) and Faster Adaption of Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) (₹ 10,000 crore) will enable India to leapfrog from traditional fossil fuel based automobile transportation system to environmentally cleaner, sustainable, advanced and more efficient Electric Vehicles (EV) based system.
- The PLI scheme comes as a follow-through of the liberalised Drone Rules, 2021 released by the Central Government on 25 August 2021.

- The PLI scheme and new drone rules are intended to catalyse super-normal growth in the upcoming drone sector.

Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity

Why In News

- NITI Aayog has recently launched a report titled 'Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity in India' on measures to ramp up urban planning capacity in India.
 - The report was released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar, CEO Shri Amitabh Kant and Special Secretary Dr K. Rajeswara Rao.

Background

- India is home to 11% of the total global urban population.
 - By 2027, India will surpass China as the most populous country in the world. Unplanned urbanization, however, exerts great strain on our cities.
- Urban planning is the foundation for an integrated development of cities, citizens, and the environment. Unfortunately, it has received due attention so far.
 - The existing urban planning and governance framework is complex, which often leads to ambiguity and lack of accountability.
- The report has been developed by NITI Aayog, in consultation with concerned ministries and eminent experts in the domain of urban and regional planning.
- It presents a condensed outcome of the extensive deliberations and consultations conducted over a period of 9 months.

Brief Details

The report makes several recommendations that can unblock bottlenecks in the value chain of urban planning capacity in India. Some of them are:

- Programmatic Intervention for Planning of Healthy Cities:** Every city must aspire to become a 'Healthy City for All' by 2030.
 - The report recommends a Central Sector Scheme '500 Healthy Cities Programme', for a period of 5 years, wherein priority cities and towns would be selected jointly by the states and local bodies.
- Programmatic Intervention for Optimum Utilization of Urban Land:** All the cities and towns under the proposed 'Healthy Cities Programme' should strengthen development control regulations based on scientific evidence to maximize the efficiency of urban land (or planning area).
 - The report recommends a sub-scheme 'Preparation/Revision of Development Control Regulations' for this purpose.
- Ramping Up of Human Resources:** To combat the shortage of urban planners in the public sector, the report recommends that the states/UTs may need to a) expedite the filling up of vacant positions of town planners, and b) additionally sanction 8268 town planners' posts as lateral entry positions for a minimum period of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years to meet the gaps.
- Ensuring Qualified Professionals for Undertaking Urban Planning:** State town and country planning departments face an acute shortage of town planners.
 - This is compounded by the fact that in several states, ironically, a qualification in town planning is not even an essential criterion for such jobs.
- Re-engineering of Urban Governance:** There is a need to bring in more institutional clarity and also multi-disciplinary expertise to solve urban challenges.
 - The report recommends the constitution of a high-powered committee to re-engineer the present urban-planning governance structure.
 - The key aspects that would need to be addressed in this effort are:
 - i) Clear division of the roles and responsibilities of various authorities, appropriate revision of rules and regulations, etc.
 - ii) Creation of a more dynamic organizational structure, standardisation of the job descriptions of town planners and other experts.
 - iii) Extensive adoption of technology for enabling public participation and inter-agency coordination.

- f. **Revision of Town and Country Planning Acts:** Most States have enacted the Town and Country Planning Acts that enable them to prepare and notify master plans for implementation.
- o However, many need to be reviewed and upgraded. Therefore, the formation of an apex committee at the state level is recommended to undertake a regular review of planning legislations (including town and country planning or urban and regional development acts or other relevant acts).
- g. **Demystifying Planning and Involving Citizens:** While it is important to maintain the master plans' technical rigour, it is equally important to demystify them for enabling citizens' participation at relevant stages.
- o Therefore, the committee strongly recommends a '*Citizen Outreach Campaign*' for demystifying urban planning.
- h. **Steps for Enhancing the Role of Private Sector:** The report recommends that concerted measures must be taken at multiple levels to strengthen the role of the private sector to improve the overall planning capacity in the country.
- o These include the adoption of fair processes for procuring technical consultancy services, strengthening project structuring and management skills in the public sector, and empanelment of private sector consultancies.

Steps for Strengthening Urban Planning Education System

- The Central universities and technical institutions in all the other States/UTs are encouraged to offer postgraduate degree programmes (M.Tech Planning) to cater to the requirement of planners in the country in a phased manner.
- The committee also recommends that all such institutions may synergize with Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Panchayati Raj and respective state rural development departments/directorates and develop demand-driven short-term programmes on rural area planning.
- 'Planning' as an umbrella term, including all its specializations such as environment, housing, transportation, infrastructure, logistics, rural area, regional, etc., or any other nomenclature approved by AICTE, should be included as a discipline under the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF) of MoE to encourage a healthy competition among the institutions.
- The committee recommends that AICTE may retain the names of specializations based on industry requirements, while limiting them to an appropriate number, as 25 nomenclatures seem too high for market acknowledgement and absorption.
- Faculty shortage in educational institutions conducting degree and PhD programmes in planning need to be resolved in a time bound manner by 2022.

Measures for Strengthening Human Resource and Match Demand-Supply:

- The report recommends the constitution of a 'National Council of Town and Country Planners' as a statutory body of the Government of India.
- Also, a 'National Digital Platform of Town and Country Planners' is suggested to be created within the National Urban Innovation Stack of MoHUA.
 - o This portal will enable self-registration of all planners and evolve as a marketplace for potential employers and urban planners.

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Global Innovation Index 2021

Why In News

- India has climbed 2 spots and has been ranked 46th by the World Intellectual Property Organization in the Global Innovation Index 2021 rankings.
 - India has been on a rising trajectory, over the past several years in the Global Innovation Index (GII), from a rank of 81 in 2015 to 46 in 2021.

Background

- The NITI Aayog has been working tirelessly to ensure the optimization of the national efforts for bringing policy led innovation in different areas such as electric vehicles, biotechnology, nano technology, space, alternative energy sources, etc.
- The India Innovation Index, the latest edition of which was released last year by the NITI Aayog, has been widely accepted as a major step in the direction of decentralization of innovation across all the states of India.
- A constant thrust in monitoring and evaluating India's position in the global rankings has been provided by the NITI Aayog, including in the GII.
- This year, the NITI Aayog, in partnership with the CII and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), hosted, virtually, the India Launch of the GII and the Global Innovation Conclave during September 21-22, 2021.

About Global Innovation Index

- The Global Innovation Index (GII) takes the pulse of the most recent global innovation trends.
 - It ranks the innovation ecosystem performance of economies around the globe each year while highlighting innovation strengths and weaknesses and particular gaps in innovation metrics.
- The 2021 edition of the GII presents the latest global innovation ranking of 132 economies, relying on 81 different indicators.
 - While tracking the most recent global innovation trends in the new Global Innovation Tracker, this edition also focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on innovation.



Conclusion

- The consistent improvement in the GII ranking is owing to the immense knowledge capital, the vibrant start-up ecosystem, and the amazing work done by the public and the private research organizations.
- The Scientific Departments like the Department of Atomic Energy; the Department of Science and Technology; the Department of Biotechnology and the Department of Space have played a pivotal role in enriching the National Innovation Ecosystem.
- Innovation has been at the forefront of our battle against the unprecedented crisis created by the pandemic, and will be pivotal in driving the country's resilience and self-reliance, as enshrined in the very idea of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

State Food Safety Index

Why in News

- In an effort to galvanize States to work towards ensuring safe food for citizens, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Shri Mansukh Mandaviya released *Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s 3rd State Food Safety Index (SFSI)* to measure the performance of States across five parameters of food safety.
- He also flagged off 19 Mobile Food Testing Vans (Food Safety on Wheels) to supplement the food safety ecosystem across the country taking the total number of such mobile testing vans to 109.
- The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare felicitated nine leading States/UTs based on the ranking for the year 2020-21 for their impressive performance.
 - This year, among the larger states, **Gujarat was the top ranking state**, followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Among the smaller states, Goa stood first followed by Meghalaya and Manipur.
 - Among UTs, Jammu & Kashmir, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and New Delhi secured top ranks.

Details

- The Union Minister released the results of PAN-India survey for identifying the presence of industrially produced Trans fatty acid content in the selected foods.
- Samples of various packaged food items under six pre-defined food categories were collected from 419 cities/districts across 34 States/UTs. Overall, only 84 samples, i.e. 1.34%, have more than 3% industrially produced Trans fats from the total of 6245 samples.
- As part of the ongoing efforts to engage industry on the issue of plastic in food packaging, 24 food businesses signed a pledge on becoming "*Plastic Waste Neutral*" by collecting, processing and recycling of 100% post-consumer plastic waste from across the sources. 21 companies have committed themselves to reduce the levels of virgin plastic in the food and beverage sector.

Conclusion

- Food is an essential component of health in a holistic sense and balanced nutrition is an integral part of Health.
- The mobile food testing laboratories will not only help functionaries in the States/UTs to enhance their outreach and conduct surveillance activities even in the far-flung areas, but will also be utilized as an effective tool for training and awareness generation activities amongst citizens.

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

Why in News

- Shri Piyush Goyal, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles, and Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, United Arab Emirates Minister of State for Foreign Trade, have formally launched negotiations on the India-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- The first round of CEPA negotiations was held on 23-24 September 2021.

Background

- The UAE is currently India's third-largest trading partner with bilateral trade in 2019/2020 valued at USD 59 billion.
- The UAE is also India's second-largest export destination after the US, with exports valued at approximately USD 29 billion in 2019-2020.
- India was the UAE's second-largest trading partner in 2019, with bilateral non-oil trade valued at USD 41 billion.
- The UAE is the eighth-largest investor in India, having invested USD 11 billion between April 2000 and March 2021, while investment by Indian companies in the UAE is estimated to be over USD 85 billion.
- India's major exports to the UAE include petroleum products, precious metals, stones, gems and jewellery, minerals, food items such as cereals, sugar, fruits and vegetables, tea, meat, and seafood, textiles, engineering and machinery products, and chemicals.
- India's top imports from the UAE include petroleum and petroleum products, precious metals, stones, gems and jewellery, minerals, chemicals and wood and wood products. India imported USD 10.9 billion of crude oil from the UAE in 2019-2020.

Implications

- CEPA is expected to create new jobs, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in both nations.
- A new strategic economic agreement is expected to increase bilateral trade in goods to USD 100 billion within five years of the signed agreement and increase trade in services to USD 15 billion.

Medical Device Parks

Why in News

- The Government of India has taken a key initiative to support the medical devices industry to reach its potential in the coming years identifying the industry is as a sunrise sector with great potential for diversification and employment generation.
- Recognizing the need for higher levels of investments for the creation of proper infrastructure in the sector, the Department of Pharmaceuticals has notified the Scheme for "Promotion of Medical Device Parks".

Objectives

- Easy access to standard testing and infrastructure facilities through creation of world class common infrastructure facilities for increased competitiveness will result into significant reduction of the cost of production of medical devices leading to better availability and affordability of medical devices in the domestic market.
- Reaping the benefits arising due to optimization of resources and economies of scale.

Details

- The Medical Devices Parks to be developed under the scheme will provide common infrastructure facilities at one place thereby creating a robust ecosystem for the medical device manufacturing in the country and also reducing the manufacturing cost significantly.
- The total financial outlay of the scheme is Rs. 400 crore and the tenure of the scheme is from FY 2020-2021 to FY 2024-2025.
 - The financial assistance to a selected Medical Device Park would be 70% of the project cost of common infrastructure facilities.
 - In case of North Eastern States and Hilly States, financial assistance would be 90% of the project cost. Maximum assistance under the scheme for one Medical Device Park would be limited to Rs. 100 crores.
- In total, proposal from 16 States/UTs were received under the scheme.
 - The selection of the States/UTs is based on the challenge method, which is reflected in the evaluation criteria of the scheme.
 - The ranking methodology for States/UTs is based on the parameters prescribed in the scheme guidelines such as utility charges, State policy incentives, total area of the park, land lease rate, connectivity of the park, ease of doing business ranking, availability of technical manpower etc.
 - Based on the evaluation, the proposals of State Government of Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have been given "in-principle" approval under the scheme.
 - Further qualitative assessment of the said States in terms of their fiscal capability, ecosystem attractiveness and industrial presence also validated the selection of these States.

Conclusion

- The scheme reflects the spirit of co-operative federalism where the Central Government and State Governments will partner to develop the Medical Device parks for better performance of the sector.

Financial Stability and Development Council

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs chaired the 24th meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC).

Brief Details

- The meeting deliberated on the various mandates of the FSDC, viz., Financial Stability, Financial Sector Development, Inter-regulatory Coordination, Financial Literacy, Financial Inclusion, and Macro prudential supervision of the economy including the functioning of large financial conglomerates etc.
- The Council also, inter alia, discussed issues relating to management of stressed assets, strengthening institutional mechanism for financial stability analysis, financial inclusion, framework for resolution of financial institutions and issues related to IBC processes, banks' exposure to various sectors and Government, data sharing mechanisms of government authorities, internationalisation of Indian Rupee and pension sector related issues.
- The Council also took note of the activities undertaken by the FSDC Sub-Committee chaired by the Governor, RBI and the action taken by members on the past decisions of FSDC.

About The FSDC

- **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)** is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India.
- The idea to create such a super regulatory body was first mooted by the Raghuram Rajan Committee in 2008.

- Finally in 2010, the then Finance Minister of India, Pranab Mukherjee, decided to set up such an autonomous body dealing with macro prudential and financial regularities in the entire financial sector of India.
- An apex-level FSDC is not a statutory body.
- The recent global economic meltdown has put pressure on governments and institutions across the globe to regulate their economic assets. This council is seen as India's initiative to be better conditioned to prevent such incidents in future.
- The new body envisages to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism of maintaining financial stability, financial sector development, inter-regulatory coordination along with monitoring macro-prudential regulation' of economy.
- No funds are separately allocated to the council for undertaking its activities.

Composition

- It is **chaired by the Finance Minister** and its members include the heads of all Financial Sector Regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA & IRDA), Finance Secretary, Secretary of Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Secretary of Department of Financial Services (DFS), and Chief Economic Adviser.
- Additional Secretary, Ministry of Finance, DEA, will be the Secretary of the Council.
- The Chairperson may invite any person whose presence is deemed necessary for any of its meetings.

GENERAL STUDIES III

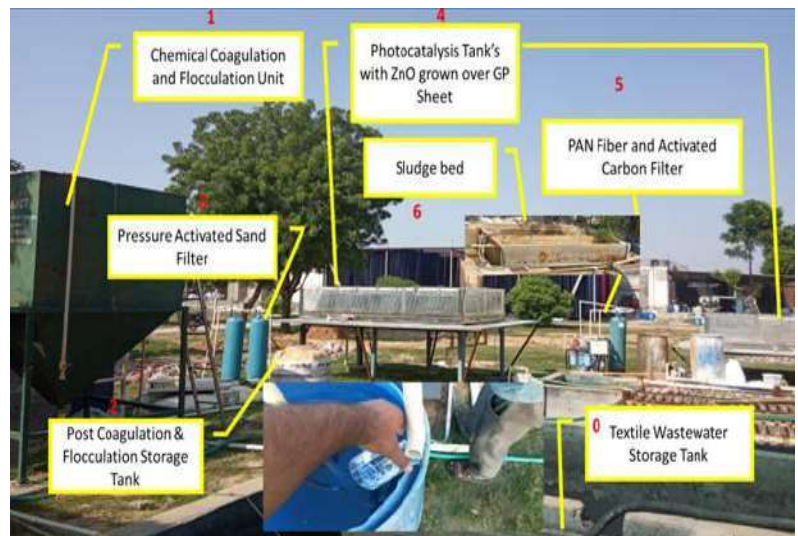
Improved water management system

Why in News

- Indian researchers have developed an improved wastewater treatment solution that can completely reuse industrial dye wastewater from textile industry, eliminating its toxicity and making it suitable for domestic and industrial usage.
 - It can reduce water treatment costs and facilitate the reuse of the water in dry regions.
- Department of Science and Technology (DST) Government of India (GoI) – Water Technology Initiative (WTI), along with the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE), supported the development of this technology at a pilot level in collaboration with Laxmi Textile Prints, Jaipur for the commissioning of this pilot-scale plant at Textile Industrial Park, Jaipur.

Background

- The current *3-stage treatment process* for wastewater consisting of primary, secondary, and tertiary treatment is unable to treat toxic industrial wastewater.
- The stand-alone *AOP treatment technique for colour and odour properties in industrial effluents* (dye-based) may be insufficient to meet set government standards and is also limited due to the high cost of AOPs involving continuous supply of chemical reagents.
 - This is because it cannot remove the synthetic industrial dyes and the effervescent colour and odour, which have a long-lasting carcinogenic and toxic effect on the ecological and especially aquatic life.
 - In order to remove this toxicity, an upgraded solution with the Advanced Oxidation Process (AOP) technology is the need of the day.



Brief Details

- This completely modified treatment process consists of the primary dosing step followed by the sand filtration step, another AOP and subsequent carbon filtration step.
 - It eliminates the need for the conventional primary, secondary, and tertiary processes resulting in maximum colour removal and meets the inland water discharge standards.
- The much-improved **Advanced Oxidation Process (AOP)** technology targeting zero discharge water management system is being utilized for the complete reuse of industrial dye wastewater for domestic and industrial usage at a rate of 10 Kilo litres / day.
 - The treatment of toxic and highly carcinogenic industrial dyes of textile effluents is performed using this AOP technology for degrading and mineralizing recalcitrant organic matter from effluent wastewater.
- It is a direct replacement of the existing treatment plant processes and consists of a low-cost solution of dye adsorption on acid-modified soil followed by a photochemical reaction step within a photocatalytic visible light filter and a unique carbon and PAN nano-mat fibre filtration process

Benefits and Conclusion

- The technology has resulted in the recuperation of 50% of the treatment cost incurred from conventional processes for water treatment (especially due to the high cost of sludge disposability) in the water-scarce regions of Rajasthan.
- Further, scaling up of this plant to 100 Kilo litres / day capacity to meet the current industrial requirement is underway with automated plant operations.

Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)

Why in News

- Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri has recently co-chaired a virtual Ministerial meeting with U.S. Secretary of Energy Ms. Jennifer Granholm to launch the revamped U.S.-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP).

About U.S.-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)

- The SCEP is launched in accordance with U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden at the Leaders' Summit on Climate held in April 2021.
- The SCEP organizes inter-governmental engagement across five pillars of cooperation:
 - a. Power and Energy Efficiency.
 - b. Responsible Oil and Gas.
 - c. Renewable Energy.
 - d. Sustainable Growth.
 - e. Emerging Fuels.

Details of the Meeting

- Minister Puri and Secretary Granholm reviewed the progress, major accomplishments, and prioritized new areas for cooperation under the various pillars.
- Minister Puri emphasized that the revamped clean energy partnership will intensify the efforts from both sides to take advantage of the complementarities that exist between US and India - advanced US technologies and rapidly growing India's energy market, for a win-win situation through a cleaner energy route with low carbon pathways.
- The two sides announced addition of a fifth Pillar on Emerging Fuels, which signals joint resolve to promote cleaner energy fuels.
 - A new India-US Task Force on Biofuels was also announced to build on the scope of work on cooperation in biofuels sector.
 - There would considerable emphasis on up scaling cooperation under the renewable energy pillar by working on several projects and system-friendly practices in India's renewable energy sector.
 - *US Secretary lauded India's renewable energy target of 450 GW by 2030, and offered to closely collaborate in realization of this target by India.*

- Both sides will strengthen the electric grid in India to support large-scale integration of renewables, including through smart grids, energy storage, flexible resources, and distributed energy resources, and ensure reliable and resilient grid operations, as well as promoting energy efficiency and conservation measures.
- *The two sides also announced rechristening of Gas Task Force to India-US Low Emissions Gas Task Force, which would continue to forge collaboration between U.S. and Indian companies on innovative projects to support India's vision of gas-based economy.*
 - The two sides also agreed to continue to develop better understandings on methane abatement under this Task Force.
- Both sides have initiated institutionalization of India Energy Modelling Forum with the constitution of Six Task Forces for carrying out research and modelling in different areas.
 - Joint Committees have been set up to deliberate on Energy Data Management, Low Carbon Technologies and Just Transition in Coal Sector.
 - Building on the success of the first phase, the two sides agreed to expand the scope of the work to include smart grid and grid storage as part of the second phase of the *Partnership to Advance Clean Energy (PACE)-R* initiative anchored on the Indian side by the Department of Science & Technology.

Minimum Support Prices (MSP)

Why in News

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) on 8th September 2021 for all designated Rabi crops for Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2022-23, when in advance of the sowing season.
- During RMS 2021-22, Haryana and Punjab has switched from indirect payment of MSP to direct online transfer to farmers' bank account.
 - DBT of MSP has brought in transparency and real time monitoring of the procurement operations.

Background

- The policies of Government of India and decision taken in recent years towards farmers' welfare have resulted insignificant improvement of food grain production and sustained agriculture growth despite COVID-19 pandemic.
- Normally MSP for Rabi season was announced in October.
 - Last year it was announced on 23rd September and for the year 2022-23 it was further advanced and announced on 8th September 2021.
 - Procurement operations under MSP continued despite disruptions in logistic activities during the initial days of lock down in wake of COVID pandemic.
 - Number of procurement centers were increased as compared to previous years to facilitate the farmers for selling their produce at the nearest procurement centre maintaining COVID protocols.

About MSP

- MSP is an integral component of Agriculture Price Policy and it targets to ensure support price to farmers and affordable prices to the consumer.
 - The Government of India declares MSP based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)
 - The views of State Governments and Central Ministries/Departments concerned are also considered.
 - It is declared for agricultural crops such as Cereal, Pulses, Oilseeds and commercial crops every year at the beginning of the sowing season.
- MSP is announced for the Kharif crops of Paddy, Jowar, Bajara, Ragi, Maize, Arhar, Moong, Urad, Cotton, Groundnut, Sunflower Seed, Soyabean, Sesamum.
- The Rabi crops for which MSP is announced are Wheat, Barley, Gram, Masur, Rapeseeds & Mustard, Safflower and Toria.
- Apart from this, MSP is announced for Copra, De-husked Coconut, Jute.
- For Sugarcane, a Fair Remunerative Prices (FRP) is announced.

Factors Considered

- The factors considered by CACP for fixing MSP include :

- a. Cost of Production.
- b. Domestic and International prices.
- c. Demand-Supply conditions.
- d. Inter-Crop price parity.
- e. Terms of trade between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.
- **The MSP approved for designated Rabi Crops for 2022-23 during Rabi Marketing Season is higher or equal to 1.5 times of cost of production.**
- The expected returns to farmers over their cost of production is estimated to be highest in case of Wheat (100%) and rapeseed/mustard (100%), followed by lentil (79%) and gram (74%); barley (60%); safflower (50%).

Cost of Production

It refers to comprehensive cost which includes all paid out costs such as those incurred on account of :

- a. Hired human labour, bullock labour/machine labour.
- b. Rent paid for leased in land.
- c. Expenses incurred on use of material inputs like seeds, fertilizers, manure, irrigation charges.
- d. Depreciation on implements and farm buildings.
- e. Interest on working capital, diesel/electricity for operation of pump sets etc.
- f. Miscellaneous expenses and imputed value of family labour.

Procurement

- Procurement of agriculture produce of designated crops on MSP to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers is done in collaboration with the State Governments.
- Procurement of wheat and Paddy at MSP comes under Schemes implemented by **Deptt. of Food & Public Distribution (DFPD)** through centralized and de-centralized procurement mechanism.
 - The procured Wheat and Paddy is utilized in distribution under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other welfare schemes under National Food Security Act(NFSA).
- Procurement of pulses and oilseeds is made at MSP as per the Schemes under **PM-AASHA scheme of DA&FW**.
 - The procurement of Notified Pulses are done under **Price support Scheme (PSS)** by the Central Nodal Agencies through State designated Agencies during harvesting season.
 - Since 2015 onward the procurement of Pulses is also done at MSP for maintenance of National Buffer stock of Pulses under Price Stabilization Fund (PSF).
- Procurement of Coarse grains is being done as per the existing scheme of Department of Food and Public Distribution. Procurement of Cotton is done at MSP by the Cotton Corporation of India under the Scheme implemented by Ministry of Textiles.
- The procurement of Copra is also being done under PSS in the Copra producing States based on the receipt of the proposal as per PSS guideline under PMAASHA.

Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD)

Why in News

- India and the United States of America (USA) has recently launched the "*Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD)*".
 - It is one of the two tracks of the India-U.S. *Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030* partnership launched at the Leaders' Summit on Climate in April 2021, by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and US President Mr. Joseph Biden.
 - The dialogue was formally launched by Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Shri Bhupender Yadav and Mr. John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate (SPEC).

Background

- **This is a very significant event that is taking place before 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26), which will be held between October 31 and November 12, 2021, in Glasgow, UK.**
- The COP26 summit will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Brief description of Initiatives

- Mr. John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate proposed that USA is willing to enter into a genuine collaboration with India to enable us realise the ambitious target of reaching 450 GW Renewable Energy by 2030

which would pave the way to India achieving sub 2°C level, much more than what has been committed under Paris Climate Agreement.

- Both sides agreed that Indian labs could work with the US labs with the objective of reducing costs and finding alternative chemistry for making energy transition economically viable.

Conclusion

- The dialogue will strengthen India-US bilateral cooperation on climate and environment.
- It is also expected to help to demonstrate how the world can align swift climate action with inclusive and resilient economic development, taking into account national circumstances and sustainable development priorities.

Hybodont Shark From Jurassics

Why in News

- In a rare discovery, teeth of new species of hybodontshark of Jurassic age have been reported for the first time from Jaisalmer by a team of officers comprising Krishna Kumar, Pragya Pandey, Triparna Ghosh and Debasish Bhattacharya from the Geological Survey of India (GSI), Western Region, Jaipur.
- This finding has been published in Historical Biology, a Journal of Palaeontology of International repute, in its August, 2021, 4th issue. Prof. Dr. Sunil Bajpai, Head of the Department, Department of Earth Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, who is a co-author of this publication, played a significant role in the identification and documentation of this important discovery.

Details

- Hybodont sharks have been reported for the first time from the Jurassic rocks* (approximately between 160 and 168 million-years-old) of the Jaisalmer region of Rajasthan.

Hybodonts

- Hybodonts, an extinct group of sharks, was a dominant group of fishes in both marine and fluvial environments during the Triassic and early Jurassic time.
- However, hybodont sharks started to decline in marine environments from the Middle Jurassic onwards until they formed a relatively minor component of open-marine shark assemblages.
- Hybodonts finally became extinct at the end of the Cretaceous time 65 million years ago.



Significance of the discovery

- The newly discovered crushing teeth from Jaisalmer represents a new species named by the research team as *Strophodus jaisalmerensis*.
- The genus *Strophodus* has been identified for the first time from the Indian subcontinent and is only the third such record from Asia, the other two being from Japan and Thailand.
- This discovery marks an important milestone in the study of Jurassic vertebrate fossils in the Jaisalmer region of Rajasthan, and it opens a new window for further research in the domain of vertebrate fossils.

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About GSI

- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) was set up in 1851 primarily to find coal deposits for the Railways.
 - Over the years, GSI has not only grown into a repository of geo-science information required in various fields in the country but has also attained the status of a geo-scientific organisation of international repute.
- Its main functions relate to creating and updating of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment.
 - These objectives are achieved through ground surveys, air-borne and marine surveys, mineral prospecting and investigations, multi-disciplinary geoscientific, geo-technical, geo-environmental and natural hazards studies, glaciology, seism tectonic study, and carrying out fundamental research.
- GSI's core competence in survey and mapping is continuously enhanced through accretion, management, co-ordination and utilization of spatial databases (including those acquired through remote sensing).
- GSI uses latest computer-based technologies for dissemination of geoscientific information and spatial data, through cooperation and collaboration with other stakeholders in the Geo-informatics sector.
- Headquartered in Kolkata, GSI an attached office to the Ministry of Mines.*

Low carbon bricks

Why in News

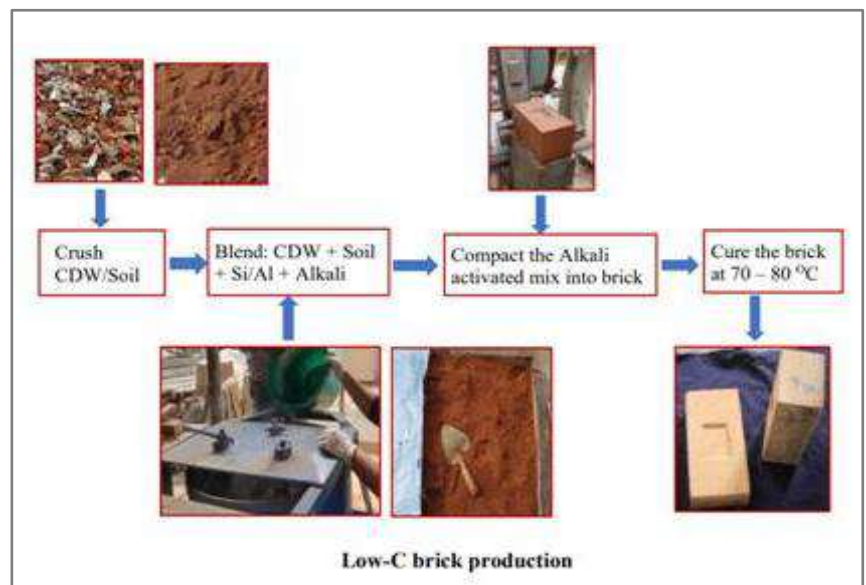
- Researchers have developed a technology to produce energy-efficient walling materials using construction and demolition (C&D) waste and alkali-activated binders.
- These are called low-C bricks, do not require high-temperature firing, and avoid the use of high-energy materials such as Portland cement.
- The technology will also solve the disposal problems associated with C&D waste mitigation.

Background

- Conventionally, building envelopes consist of masonry walls built with burnt clay bricks, concrete blocks, hollow clay blocks, fly ash bricks, lightweight blocks, and so on.
- The envelopes spend energy during their production, thus incurring carbon emission (i.e., possess embodied carbon) consume mined raw material resources which lead to unsustainable constructions.
- The masonry units are manufactured either through the process of firing or using high-energy/embodied carbon binders such as Portland cement.
 - As a result, the annual consumption of bricks and blocks in India is about 900 million tonnes.
- Besides, the construction industry generates vast amounts (70 – 100 million tonnes per annum) of construction and demolition waste (CDW). In order to promote sustainable construction, two important issues need to be addressed while manufacturing the masonry units – conserving mined raw material resources and emission reduction.

What has been done

- Scientists of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) developed a technology for producing alkali-activated bricks/blocks by utilising fly ash and furnace slag.
- The team of researchers developed low embodied carbon bricks from CDW through an alkali activation process using fly ash and ground slag and characterising the thermal, structural, and durability characteristics of Low-C bricks and their masonry.
- After ascertaining the Physico-chemical and compaction characteristics of the CDW, the optimum mix ratios of the materials were obtained, and then the



production process was evolved to produce low-C bricks.

- Based on the optimum binder proportions, the compressed bricks were manufactured. The bricks were examined for engineering characteristics.

Conclusion

- The major beneficiary of this development undertaken by IISc Bangalore with funding from the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, is the construction industry in general and the building sector in particular.
- This technology will also mitigate the disposal problems associated with the C&D wastes.

Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)

Why in News

- A recent study has shown how conditions and events in the solar atmosphere like coronal mass ejections influence the accuracy of space weather prediction, which is crucial for the health of our satellites.
- This understanding will aid the interpretation of data from the upcoming Aditya-L1, India's first solar mission.

Background

- Space weather refers to the conditions in the solar wind and near-Earth space, which can adversely affect the performance of space-borne and ground-based technological systems.
- The space weather near the Earth is mainly due to **Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)**, which are frequent explosive expulsions of huge magnetized plasma from the Sun into its surroundings, which can blow past the Earth.
 - Example of space weather events is the **geomagnetic storm**, a perturbation in the Earth's magnetic field, which can last for few hours to few days.
- Understanding of how events in the solar atmosphere influence space weather is necessary for monitoring and maintaining our satellites.

What now is found?

- In the present work, astronomers led by Dr. Wageesh Mishra of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. Of India showed that plasma properties and Earth arrival times of CMEs from the Sun can vary substantially with longitudinal locations in the interplanetary space.
- This research is published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomy journal

Brief Detail

- In this research, the team studied the Earth-directed CMEs and interplanetary counterparts of CMEs (ICMEs).
- With access to publicly available plasma measurements in situ at three locations in the Solar System, -- **two of NASA's STEREO spacecraft and the LASCO coronagraph** onboard SOHO located near the first Lagrangian point (L1) on the Sun-Earth line, they reconstructed a 3D view of the CMEs & ICMEs.
- The two events that are the basis of the present study are the ICMEs of 11th March and 6th August 2011 (which is when they arrived at Earth).
 - Using multi-point remote and in situ observations, the study investigated the differences in the dynamics, arrival time, plasma, and magnetic field parameters of ICME structures at the locations in the heliosphere where the different satellites are located.
- The team explains Sun emits a continuous stream of charged particles called the Solar Wind. The two selected events were ideal for studying the effects of the CME shocks moving through the solar wind.

Implication

- The study highlights the difficulties in connecting the local observations of an ICME from a single in situ spacecraft to its global structures and explains that accurate prediction of large CME structures at any location in the heliosphere is challenging.
- It emphasized that lack of information about the pre-conditioned ambient solar wind medium can severely limit the accuracy of CME arrival time and space weather prediction.
- This new understanding will aid the interpretation of data from space missions.

Blue straggler

Why in News?

- Carrying out the first-ever comprehensive analysis of blue stragglers, Indian researchers found that half of the blue stragglers in their sample are formed through mass transfer from a close binary companion star, one third are likely formed through collisions of 2 stars, and the remaining are formed through interactions of more than 2 stars.

About Blue Straggler

- Blue stragglers are a class of star observed in old, dense stellar systems such as globular clusters.
- They stand out because old stellar populations are expected to be devoid of blue (high-mass) stars which possess very short lifespans.
- The blue stragglers in an old stellar population must therefore have formed long after the system as a whole.
- It is a main-sequence star in an open or globular cluster that is more luminous and bluer than stars at the main sequence turnoff point for the cluster.

Background

- A bunch of stars born at the same time from the same cloud form a star cluster. As time passes, each star evolves differently depending on its mass.
- The most massive and bright stars evolve and move off the main sequence creating a bend in their track, known as the turnoff.
- Stars above this bend or brighter and hotter stars are not expected in a cluster, as they leave the main sequence to become red giants.
- In 1953, Allan Sandage found that some stars seem to be hotter than the turnoff of the parent cluster.
- Initially, these blue stars still straggling above the turnoff were not part of these clusters.
- However, later studies confirmed that these stars are indeed cluster members, and they were termed "Blue Stragglers".
- The only probable way these stars can still be present in these clusters is if they have somehow acquired extra mass along the way while on the main sequence.
- Confirming the mechanisms of the mass gain required a study using a large sample of blue-straggler stars and estimates of the mass they have gained.

How are they formed?

- A clue to their origin is that they are only found in *dense* stellar systems, where distances between stars are extremely small (a fraction of a light year).
- In these dense environments (for example the cores of globular clusters), collisions between stars are relatively common, and it has long been believed that blue stragglers are the result of the merger of two old, red stars.
- This merger produces a star with a greater mass (hence bluer in colour), and severely disrupts the two stars involved, mixing hydrogen into the stellar core and giving the star a new lease on life.

Eastern Economic Forum 2021

Why in News

- PM delivered a video-address during the plenary session of the 6th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) held on 3 September 2021 in Vladivostok.
- It may be recalled that PM was the Chief Guest for the 5th EEF in 2019, the first by an Indian PM.

Brief Detail

- Applauding President Putin's vision for the development of the Russian Far East, PM reiterated India's commitment as part of its 'Act East Policy' of being a reliable partner of Russia in this regard.
 - PM stressed on the importance of greater economic and commercial engagement between the two sides in line with the 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'.
- Highlighted the importance of health and pharma sectors as important areas of cooperation that have emerged during the pandemic.

- Referred to other potential areas of economic cooperation including diamond, coking coal, steel, timber etc.

About The Eastern Economic Forum

- It was established by decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2015 to support the economic development of Russia's Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The Russian president and the Japanese premier have attended this forum since its beginning.
- It is an international forum held each year in Vladivostok, Russia, for the purpose of encouraging foreign investment in the Russian Far East.
- Far East Economic Forum is sponsored by the organizing committee appointed by Roscongress, an association of the Russian Government, which also sponsors other international forums, such as St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.
- The Forum puts together representatives of a broad range of sectors from more than 60 countries and territories around the world.
- The main theme of this year's Forum is 'New Opportunities for the Far East in a Changed World.'

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

| SL | Topic | Details |
|----|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 | BRICS Summit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prime Minister of India has recently chaired the 13th BRICS Summit virtually. The theme of the Summit, chosen by India, was, BRICS@15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus. The Summit saw the participation of all other BRICS Leaders – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil. President Vladimir Putin of Russia. President Xi Jinping of China. President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa. |
| 02 | Ex-ZAPAD 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Exercise ZAPAD 2021 commenced at Nizhniy in Russia with an aim to train troops to undertake joint operations in conventional battlefield scenario. The exercise aims at strengthening long standing strategic partnership between India and Russia and also enhance better understanding, cooperation with all other participating Nations. |
| 03 | Germany | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides discussed at length on a wide range of environmental issues covering areas such as climate change, water scarcity, marine & air pollution, circular economy etc. Both sides stressed on the importance of information exchange in bilateral programmes keeping climate and SDG indicators in focus-Agro-Ecology, Solar Partnership Inter resilience. |
| 04 | Denmark | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides have held discussion on Green Strategic Partnership (GSP) and upcoming COP 26 meeting. |

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|----|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Environment Ministers also discussed on the Joint Action Plan to take forward the Green Strategic Partnership (GSP) in the environment sector. |
| 05 | Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Counter Terrorism Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION is a Multilateral Exercise, which is conducted biennially as part of military diplomacy between Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states. The 6th edition of Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION is being hosted by Russia in the Orenburg Region of South West Russia from 13 to 25 September 2021. The aim of the exercise is to foster close relations between SCO member states and to enhance abilities of the military leaders to command multi-national military contingents. |
| 06 | EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15th Edition of Indo - Nepal Joint Military Training, Exercise Surya Kiran between Indian Army and Nepali Army is commencing from 20 September 2021 at Pithoragarh (UK). During this exercise, an Infantry Battalion from Indian Army and an equivalent strength from Nepali Army would be sharing their experiences gained during the conduct of various counter-insurgency operations over a prolonged period in their respective countries. |
| 07 | SAMUDRA SHAKTI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Naval Ships Shivalik and Kadmat has participated in the 3rd edition of Bilateral Exercise 'Samudra Shakti' with the Indonesian Navy at Sunda Strait from 20 Sep to 22 Sep 21. The exercise aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship, enhance mutual understanding and interoperability in maritime operations between the two navies. |
| 08 | SIMBEX | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 28th edition of Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) was conducted from 02 to 04 Sep 21 in the southern fringes of the South China Sea. The exercise has been held annually since 1994. In 2020, the 27th edition of SIMBEX took place in Andaman Sea. |
| 09 | AUSINDEX | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Navy Task Group comprising IN Ships Shivalik and Kadmat is participating in the 4th edition of Royal Australian Navy and Indian Navy Commence Bilateral Exercise - 'AUSINDEX' from 06 to 10 Sep 21. AUSINDEX started in 2015 as a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Australia. |

SHORT LINERS

- Saline Gargle RT-PCR technique:** Nagpur-based *National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI)* under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has transferred the know-how of indigenously developed Saline Gargle RT-PCR technique, used for testing COVID-19 samples.
 - The Saline Gargle RT-PCR technology is simple, fast, cost-effective, patient-friendly and comfortable.
 - It also provides instant test results and is well-suited for rural and tribal areas, given minimal infrastructure requirements.
- Coal India Ltd. (CIL), under the Ministry of Coal has signed a MoU with the Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Assam for strengthening the health infrastructure at the Silchar Medical College & Hospital, Silchar, the only Medical College and Hospital in Barak Valley Region, Assam.**
 - In this new CSR initiative, CIL will contribute Rs. 5 crores towards setting up of an ICU facility and medical gas pipeline in the Silchar Medical College & Hospital which will benefit over 40 lakh people of the State.
- In a move to check the unfair practices of any and bring transparency in the availability of edible oils, Centre has asked States to take disclosures of stock of edible oilseeds and oils with the millers and stockist.**
 - This move is being made to ensure that there is no unfair practice and consequent rise of edible oils due to hoarding of any kind.

4. Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM)

- The first deliverable Firing Unit (FU) of Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) System was handed over to Indian Air Force (IAF).
- The MRSAM (IAF) is an advanced network centric combat Air Defence System *developed jointly by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) in collaboration with the Indian industry comprising of private and public sectors including MSMEs.*
- **Utility :**
 - a. MRSAM provides air defence against aerial threats like fighter aircraft, UAVs, guided and unguided munitions & cruise missiles.
 - b. *Capable of engaging multiple targets at ranges up to 70 kilometres.*
 - c. Indigenously developed rocket motor & control system for achieving high manoeuvrability.
 - d. State-of-the-art missile system.

5. *Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari have jointly inaugurated Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) at Satta-Gandhav stretch on NH-925A near Barmer, Rajasthan.*

- This is the first time that a National Highway has been used for emergency landing of aircraft of Indian Air Force. This landing strip will be able to facilitate landing of all types of IAF aircraft.
- The NHAI has developed the three-kilometre section as an ELF for Indian Air Force.
- Union minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari has said that Emergency Landing Facilities will be developed at 19 other places to strengthen country's security.

6. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

- The early years (0 to 8 years) are the most significant period of growth and development in a child's life.
- Children who participate in quality early childhood education programme demonstrate considerable gains in social, educational and intellectual spheres, distinctively different from those who do not participate in ECCE programmes.
- Research has shown conclusively that once students fall behind on foundational literacy and numeracy, they tend to maintain flat learning curves for years, perpetually unable to catch up.
- *The aim of FLN mission is to ensure that children learn in a joyful manner through play, stories, rhymes, activities, local art, craft and music and develop strong foundations for lifelong learning.*
- *The mission outlines learning outcomes which have been designed in a spiral and progressive manner from Preschool to grade three aiming at holistic development and learning.*

7. Pilot run of the 'special drive for Digital on boarding of street vendors under PM SVANidhi scheme 'was launched recently.

- The special drive aims to accelerate on-boarding of street vendors on the UPI QR code and handhold them to start accepting/making digital payment transactions.
- *Five major aggregators including Paytm, Phone Pe, Bharat Pe, Mswipe and Aceware have agreed to participate in 45 days special drive for digitally on boarding the street vendors with BHIM-UPI QR code on pro-bono basis.*
- Digital Payment Aggregators will educate the street vendors about the benefits of digital payments such as convenience, increased operational efficiency, seamless transfer of funds, cost saving, transparency and security.
- This will enable inclusion of Street Vendors in the formal credit ecosystem, and help in driving financial inclusion of the unorganized sector.

8. Methanol Production Plant

- BHEL R&D centre at Hyderabad began working on Indian high ash coal gasification in 2016 with support from the NITI Aayog to produce 0.25 ton per day methanol.
 - The project was supported by the Department of Science and Technology with a Rs 10 crore grant.
 - With four years of hard work BHEL successfully demonstrated a facility to create 0.25 TPD Methanol from high ash Indian coal using a 1.2 TPD Fluidized bed gasifier.
 - The methanol purity of the crude methanol produced is between 98 and 99.5 percent.
- *Methanol is utilized as a motor fuel, to power ship engines, and to generate clean power all over the world.*

- o Methanol is also used to generate di-methyl ether (DME), a liquid fuel that is very similar to diesel – existing diesel engines simply need to be minimally changed to use DME instead of diesel.
- o The majority of worldwide methanol production is derived from natural gas, which is a relatively easy process.
- Since India doesn't have much of the natural gas reserves, producing methanol from imported natural gas lead to outflow of foreign exchange and sometimes uneconomical due to excessive prices of natural gas.
- The next best option is to utilise India's abundant coal.
- However, due to the high ash percentage of Indian coal, most internationally accessible technology will not be adequate for our demands.

9. **Straddle Carrier and Girder Transporter**

- Recently, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Hon'ble Minister for Railways, Communications, and Electronics & Information Technology, flagged off indigenously designed and manufactured- Full Span Launching Equipment-Straddle Carrier and Girder Transporter to expedite the construction of viaduct for Mumbai- Ahmedabad High Speed Rail corridor.
- The full span launching equipment of 1100MT capacity is indigenously designed and manufactured by M/s Larsen & Toubro at Kanchipuram, Chennai. M/s L&T, partnered with 55 Micro-Small Medium Enterprises (MSME).
 - o India is now coming in the select group of country like Italy, Norway, Korea, and China which have been designing and manufacturing such equipment.
 - o This project will improve skillset in various rail construction technologies.
 - o Japanese counterparts will provide training to National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited employees and also to contractors.
- **STRADDLE CARRIER:** This equipment is designed to handle the Full Span Precast girders from casting bed to stacking yard and further feeding them to Bridge Gantry for further erection.
 - This is a tyre mounted self-propelled gantry crane having lifting capacity of 1100MT.
- **GIRDER TRANSPORTER:** This equipment is designed to transport the Full Span precast girders fed by Bridge Gantry to erection location.
 - This is 27 axle tyre mounted self-propelled trolley of carrying capacity of 1100MT.



10. **E-Shram portal**

- The Ministry of Labour Welfare and Employment has been organizing various camps for registration of the unorganized workers on the E-shram portal.
- The creation of a National database of all unorganized workers will help the Government in focusing on targeted and last mile delivery of the welfare schemes for the unorganized workers.
 - o So far over 27 Lakh Unorganised workers have already registered and the Government of India is actively cooperating with all the State Governments and other stakeholders for registering the workers on the portal.
- If a worker is registered on the eSHRAM portal and meets with an accident, he will be eligible for Rs 2.0 Lakh on death or permanent disability and Rs 1.0 lakh on partial disability and upon registration the workers are provided a Universal Account Number, which would make it easy for the portability of social security schemes, Ration Cards etc. especially for the migrant workers.

11. **Himalayan Diwas:** The National Mission for Clean Ganga organised Himalayan Diwas in association with Naula Foundation.

- This year's theme is 'Contribution of Himalayas and our responsibilities'.
- Himalaya Diwas is celebrated every year on 9th September in the state of Uttarakhand.

- It was officially declared as Himalaya Day in 2015.
 - It is celebrated with the aim to conserve Himalayan ecosystem and region.
12. **Main Bhi Digital 3.0:** Ministry of Housing and urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has recently launched the pilot drive 'Main Bhi Digital 3.0'.
- It is a special Campaign for Digital On boarding and Training for street vendors under PM SVANidhi scheme across 223 cities in the country.
 - The BharatPe, Mswipe, PhonePe, Paytm, Aceware are participating in this drive to issue UPI IDs, QR code and provide digital training.
 - Digital Payment Aggregators will handhold the street vendors to bring about enhanced adoption of digital transactions and behaviour change.
13. National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in partnership with Varanasi Smart City Ltd (VSCL) has recently organised a city stakeholder consultation in Varanasi to create a collaborative and participatory roadmap towards the vision of **Sugamya Kashi (Inclusive Varanasi)** in New Delhi.
14. **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) successfully launched the ATL Space Challenge 2021 for all school students across the country.**
- The ATL Space Challenge 2021 aligns with the World Space Week 2021 which is being observed from 4 to 10 October each year at the global level in order to celebrate the contributions of space science and technology.
 - Students can create a solution that can be implemented and adopted leveraging technologies such as:
- Explore Space.
 - Reach Space.
 - Inhabit Space.
 - Leverage Space.
15. **Sardar Iqbal Singh Lalpura took charge as the Chairman, National Commission for Minorities in the presence of Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi.**
16. **The MSME Tool Room, Hyderabad, Central Institute of Tool Design (CITD) has obtained a patent for the invention entitled "AUTOMATIC MACHINE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF CONICAL SHAPED FIREWORKS" for 20 years from the 10th November, 2015.**
- The aim of project is to automate the entire above process for relieving human fatigue and to save human from hazardous environment.
 - The entire process is minimal human intervention. Hence, it is safe for humans to handle the machine in Fireworks Industry.
17. **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) have granted conditional exemption from Drone Rules, 2021 to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B).**
- The permission has been granted to ICMR for conducting experimental Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) vaccine delivery in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Manipur, and Nagaland up to a height of 3000 meters using drones.

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18. **The Indian Naval Placement Agency (INPA) and Flipkart has recently signed a MoU, through which the two entities will explore opportunities for the recruitment naval of veterans at the Flipkart Group.**

- Through the MoU, INPA will identify a pool of Ex-Servicemen candidates for relevant roles as per recruitment standards of Flipkart.
 - The company will, in turn, enable these individuals transition to the corporate sector through in-house assimilation and training programs.
19. **Kushinagar Airport**: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), has declared Kushinagar Airport as a Customs notified airport. This would also facilitate international passenger movements including that of Buddhist pilgrims.
20. The Union Cabinet was apprised about the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of the Republic of India and the Department of Civil Protection of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic on Cooperation in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management.
21. **Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. (RINL) - Vishakhapatnam Steel plant (VSP)**, under Ministry of Steel is bestowed with 'Rajbhasha Keerti Puraskar'-FIRST PRIZE for effective implementation of Official Language Hindi for the year 2020-21.
22. **Shoonya**: NITI Aayog, with RMI and RMI India's support, has recently launched Shoonya – an initiative to promote zero-pollution delivery vehicles by working with consumers and industry.
- The campaign aims to accelerate adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the urban deliveries segment and create consumer awareness about the benefits of zero-pollution delivery.
23. **Global Ozone Day**
- World Ozone Day is celebrated on 16th September each year to commemorate the signing of the Montreal Protocol, an international environmental treaty for phasing out of production and consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances that came into force on this day in 1987.
 - The Day is celebrated every year to spread awareness among people about the depletion of Ozone Layer and the measures taken/ to be taken to preserve it.
 - Government of India has been celebrating the World Ozone Day since 1995 at the National and State levels.
 - *The theme World Ozone Day 2021 is "Montreal Protocol - Keeping us, our food and vaccines cool".*
24. **Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC)**, the leading NBFC in power sector, has successfully issued its maiden Euro 300 million 7-year Euro Bond issuance on 13.09.2021. The pricing of 1.841% achieved is the lowest yield locked in by an Indian Issuer in the Euro markets.
- It is the first ever Euro denominated Green bond issuance from India.
 - Moreover, it is the first ever Euro issuance by an Indian NBFC and the first Euro bond issuance from India since 2017.
25. **The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir is all set to welcome it's first-ever Government Unani Medical College & Hospital at Nawab Bagh of Ganderbal district.**
- Union Minister of Ayush and Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal will be inaugurating the BUMS (Bachelor of Unani Medicine & Surgery) course of the College on 17 September 2021.
26. **QCI launched the Prof. S.K. Joshi Laboratory Excellence Award today virtually amidst eminent dignitaries from Government & Industry.**
- This is country's first-of-its-kind Laboratory Excellence Award.
 - This Award has been instituted to promote Laboratory Quality and performance improvement in the country.
 - The award has been incepted to ensure the laboratory's commitment to achieve excellence in providing high precision testing and calibration services in line with the prevalent national/international quality systems legislations, including Health, Safety & Environment.
27. **A PLI Scheme on White Goods is designed to create complete component ecosystem for Air Conditioners and LED Lights Industry in India and make India an integral part of the global supply chains.**

- The Scheme shall extend an incentive of 4% to 6% on incremental sales for a period of five (5) years subsequent to the base year and one year of gestation period.
 - Only manufacturing of components of ACs and LED Lights will be incentivized under the Scheme.
28. **Meghalaya Enterprise Architecture Project (MeghEA):** Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Electronics & Information Technology and Shri Conrad Kongkal Sangma, jointly launched Meghalaya Enterprise Architecture Project (MeghEA).
- The MeghEA initiative is spread across 6 pillars i.e. Governance, Human Resources, Entrepreneurship, Primary Sector, Infrastructure and Environment, and envision to make Meghalaya a high income state by 2030.
 - The project aims to improve service delivery and governance for the people using power of Digital technologies.
29. **Planetarium Innovation Challenge:** MyGov India, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), has launched the Planetarium Innovation Challenge for Indian start-ups and tech entrepreneurs last week.
- The challenge aims to bring together the tech firms and Start-ups (based out of India) with the potential to build an indigenous planetariums system software using latest technologies including Augmented Reality (A.R.), Virtual Reality (V.R.) and Merged Reality (M.R.).
30. **International Coastal Clean Up Day:** The 36th International Coastal Clean-up Day was celebrated consecutively for the tenth year by Eastern Naval Command (ENC) on 18 Sep 21.
31. **The first Expression of Interest (EOI) for signing long-term agreement with upcoming dedicated Ethanol plants for supply of Ethanol has received an overwhelming response, with 197 bidders participating in the same.**
- The EOI was published by BPCL on behalf of Oil Marketing Companies under the guidance of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas on 27th August which opened on 17th September.
 - The bids are currently under evaluation.
32. **SEA CUCUMBER:** The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) team at Mandapam, Tamil Nadu seized two tonnes of sea cucumber, a banned marine species.
- Sea cucumber in India is treated as an endangered species listed under schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
 - It is primarily smuggled from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka in fishing vessels from Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin districts.
33. **Shri Charanjit Singh Channi has sworn-in as Punjab's Chief Minister recently.**
34. **Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL), a Singrauli based Coal India arm under the Ministry of Coal is all set to start 75 "Fulwari Centers" in the Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh.**
- Currently 25 centers are being run successfully with the strength of around 220 kids of the age between 6 months to 3 years.
 - NCL has allocated an amount of Rs.128.86 lakhs under CSR to run this project successfully.
35. ***Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution entered into a model MoU with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited (CSC) to increase the business opportunities and income of Fair Price Shops by way of delivery of CSC services through interested Fair Price Shop (FPS) dealers.***
- For enabling FPSs to work as a CSC Service Centre, CSC has been advised to identify feasible activities like Utility Bill payments, PAN Application, Passport Application, Election Commission Services etc. to facilitate the consumer and simultaneously provide additional income to the FPSs.
36. **In an endeavour to make women independent and employment-ready, the National Commission for Women has launched a country-wide capacity building and personality development program for women Undergraduate and Post graduate students.**

- NCW launched its first program today in collaboration with the Central University of Haryana.
 - NCW Chairperson, Smt. Rekha Sharma inaugurated the program and said that we need more women leaders in every field and the course launched by NCW will prepare women in being good leaders.
37. TRIFED has signed MoUs with Big Basket and PurtyAgrotech.
- The MoU between TRIFED and Big Basket is for the promotion and sale of the natural Van Dhan products through Big Basket platform while MoU between TRIFED and PurtyAgrotech will promote the art of growing pearls among other tribal entrepreneurs across India and tap the potential of this market.
38. *Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh flagged-in, in New Delhi on September 20, 2021, a team of National Institute of Mountaineering & Allied Sports (NIMAS) Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh, which completed a mountaineering expedition to Mount Kun (7,077 metres).*
- The team, led by Institute Director Colonel Sarfraz Singh, conducted the expedition to the Nun-Kun Mountain Massif which is the highest feature of Zaskar ranges located in Kargil.
39. Deputy Director General of Military Nursing Service Brig S V Saraswati has been bestowed with the National Florence Nightingale Award 2020.
- President Shri Ram Nath Kovind conferred the award in a virtual ceremony for her immense contribution to the MNS as nurse administrator.
 - National Florence Nightingale Award is the highest national distinction a nurse can achieve for selfless devotion and exceptional professionalism.
40. Government has decided to appoint Air Marshal V R Chaudhari, presently Vice Chief of Air Staff, as the next Chief of the Air Staff after the retirement of Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria, on 30th September, 2021.
41. The Department of Commerce is observing the 'Vanijya Saptah' (Trade & Commerce Week) during the period 20-26 September, 2021.
- A slew of programmes and events are being organized across the country highlighting Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Showcasing India as a Rising Economic Force and Green & Swachh SEZs besides handholding sessions focusing on 'From Farm to Foreign Lands' and exporter conclaves, 'Vanijya Utsav', covering all 739 districts of the country.
42. National Single Window System: DPIIT along with Invest India initiated the process of developing the portal as a National Single Window System (NSWS), which will provide a single platform to enable investors to identify and obtain approvals and clearances needed by investors, entrepreneurs, and businesses in India.
- The system is envisioned to address information asymmetry, duplication of information submitted across platforms and authorities and inefficient tracking of approvals and registration faced by investors.
43. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), Government of India and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have signed a multi-year Memorandum of Understanding to work together on sustainably improving India's livestock sector to support the nation's food and nutritional security, and protect the economic wellbeing of small-scale livestock producers.
44. Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare celebrated World Coconut Day on 2nd September.
- Coconut Development Board celebrates Coconut Day every year to create increased awareness on the importance of coconut and focus national and international attention on coconut sector.
45. Himalayan Film Festival: Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shri Anurag Thakur inaugurated the first Himalayan Film Festival on 24th September, 2021.
- The festival spanning five days was held at Leh, Ladakh from 24th to 28th September 2021.



an annual, data-based assessment of 79 public and private power distribution companies (DISCOMS) across the country to improve consumer service delivery and ensure reliable electricity supply to consumers.

- o Through this partnership, REC and J-PAL South Asia aim to provide a transparent and evidence-based channel for DISCOMS to identify gaps in their services as well as ensure a more reliable supply of power to households in line with the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules of 2020.

47. As a precursor to the upcoming India-Australia Energy Dialogue scheduled to be held on 13th October, 2021, the first Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on "Coal and Mines" between India and Australia was held here today through Video conferencing.

- o Both the sides discussed about sharing their expertise on these issues for any possible future collaboration and agreed that the discussions would also be carried forward beyond the confines of this forum.

48. Air Gun Surrender Campaign of the Arunachal Government is an important initiative to save animals and birds from poaching and for their conservation.

- o Mama Natung is Arunachal's Forest and Environment Minister.

49. The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind presented the National Service Scheme Awards for the year 2019-20 in a virtual ceremony on September 24, 2021.

- o The NSS Awards were instituted by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports in 1993-94 on the occasion of Silver Jubilee Year of National Service Scheme.
- o The aim of these awards is to recognise and reward outstanding contributions towards voluntary community service made by the Universities/ Colleges, (+2) Councils and Senior Secondary, NSS Units/ Programme Officers and NSS Volunteers.

50. Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a contract with M/s Airbus Defence and Space, Spain for acquisition of 56 C-295MW transport aircraft for the Indian Air Force, on September 24, 2021.

- o The MoD has also signed an Offset Contract with M/s Airbus Defence and Space through which M/s Airbus will discharge its offset obligations through direct purchase of eligible products and services from Indian Offset Partners.

51. The Zoological Survey of India(ZSI), Kolkata and the Natural History Museum (NHM), London have been working together over many years on mutually beneficial projects focused on the study of the fauna of India, and to recognize this long-standing relationship, and to promote its continuance for many years into the future a Memorandum of Understanding between the two great Institutions, was formally signed by the Director of ZSI and Director, NHM, London today on a virtual platform.

52. The Directorate General of Health Services under the Union Health Ministry is commemorating the International Week of the Deaf People (IWDP) 2021 to create awareness on this issue through various activities including the involvement of stakeholders.

- o The theme this year is "Celebrating Thriving Deaf Communities".

53. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has taken a historic initiative to set up Odisha's first ever Tussar Silk Yarn Production Centre at Choudwar in Cuttack district.

- o This silk yarn production centre will ensure local availability of Tussar Silk yarn, create local employment and reduce the silk production cost.
- o Tussar silk is one of the finest varieties of Silk that is distinguished by its coarseness and porous weave that give it a rugged and rustic appearance.
- o The silk yarn production centre was inaugurated by KVIC Chairman Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena.
- o Set up at a cost of Rs 75 lakh, the silk yarn production centre is capable of producing 200 KG of silk yarn worth Rs 94 lakh annually.

54. Blue Planet Prize:NHPC's 510 MW Teesta-V Power Station located in the Himalayan State of Sikkim has been conferred with the prestigious Blue Planet Prize by International Hydropower Association (IHA), a London based non-profit membership association operating in 120 countries.

- The power station has been built, owned and being operated by NHPC. The award for Teesta-V Power Station was announced during the World Hydropower Congress, 2021.
 - The IHA Blue Planet Prize is awarded to hydropower projects that demonstrate excellence in sustainable development.
 - The Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol (HSAP) is the leading international tool for measuring the sustainability of hydropower projects.
55. **UTS in Hindi** : As a Digital India initiative by Government of India and with a view to promote three C's – Cashless transactions (Digital payment), Contact less ticketing (no need to physically visit the point of sale) and Customer convenience and experience, UTS on Mobile app is now available in Hindi language apart from English.
- o User can opt any one language of his/her choice. Using UTS On Mobile app, Users can choose between paperless or paper ticket modes.
56. **CORBEVAX**: The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and its PSU, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) have supported Biological E.'s COVID-19 Vaccine candidate- CORBEVAX from Preclinical Stage to Phase III clinical studies.
57. **Hansa New Generation (NG) aircraft**: Hans New Generation (NG) aircraft, designed and developed by CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), Bangalore a constituent lab of CSIR.
- The aircraft took off from HAL airport at and flew at an altitude of 4000 ft. and gained a speed of 80 knots before it made a successful landing after about 20 minutes.
58. Ministry of Defence and US Department of Defence signed a Project Agreement (PA) for Air-Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (ALUAV) under the Joint Working Group Air Systems in the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI).
59. **Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) attended the Pacific Air Chiefs Symposium 2021 (PACS-21) at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii from 30 Aug to 02 Sep 21.**
- o The event themed "**Enduring Cooperation towards Regional Stability**" and was attended by Air Chiefs from countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - o CAS was nominated as the Dean for the Symposium.
60. Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), the premier Telecom R&D Centre of the Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications, and Government of India, observed its 38th Foundation Day celebrations.

KNOWLEDGE BANK

Parliament Committee on Official Language

- A Committee of parliament on official Language was constituted under Sec.4(1) of the Official Language Act, 1963.
 - Like any other Parliamentary Committee, this Committee does not submit its report on the table of Parliament.
 - The Committee of Parliament on official language submits its reports directly to the President of India.
- The reason behind this is that the law makers of our country were aware of the fact that if the Committee of Parliament on official Language submits its reports on the table of Parliament, the Hindi Language will be a victim of politics.
- Therefore, Committee of Parliament on Official Language submits its reports directly before the president of India under Sec.4(3) of the Official Language Act, 1963.

PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi)

About the Scheme

- It was launched on June 1, 2020 as a Central Sector Scheme.
- The scheme facilitates affordable working capital loan of up to ₹10,000 with an interest subsidy @7% on regular repayment.
- The street vendors are not required to pay any collateral for the loan.
- The scheme provides Graded Guarantee Cover, to Lending Institutions, on a portfolio basis.

Beneficiaries

- The scheme targets to cover 50 lakh street vendors, who had been vending on or before March 24, 2020.
- The street vendors also stand a chance to avail a loan of ₹20,000 and ₹50,000 in the second and third tranches respectively on timely repayment of the loan.

Digital Push

- To encourage digital transaction a cash back up to ₹1,200 on digital transactions at ₹100 per month is provided to the street vendors under the scheme.
- An Integrated IT Platform has been developed to provide end-to-end solution for the paper less loan processing.
- SIDBI has been appointed as the implementation agency for scheme administration.

Revenue Deficit Grant

Perspective : The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has recently released the 6th monthly installment of Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant of Rs. 9,871.00 crore to the States.

About the Grant

- The Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant is provided to the States under Article 275 of the Constitution.
- The grants are being released as per the recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission in monthly installments to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post devolution.
- The Commission has recommended these grants to 17 States during 2021-22.

Finance Commission

- The eligibility of States to receive this grant and the quantum of grant was decided by the Commission based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State after taking into account the assessed devolution for the financial year 2021-22.
- The Fifteenth Finance Commission has recommended a total Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant of Rs. 1,18,452 crore to 17 States in the financial year 2021-22.
 - Out of this, an amount of Rs. 59,226.00 crore (50%) has been released so far.

G-33

- The G-33 Virtual Informal Ministerial Meeting organized by Indonesia was recently to discuss the Agricultural Priority Issues and the Way Forward for the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC-12) scheduled to be held from 30th November to 3rd December 2021.
 - The Informal Ministerial Meeting was chaired by the Minister of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Muhammad Lutfi.
- The **G33 (or the Friends of Special Products in agriculture)** is a coalition of developing countries, established prior to the 2003 Cancun ministerial conference, that have coordinated during the Doha Round of World Trade Organization negotiations, specifically in regard to agriculture.
 - Dominated by India, the group has "defensive" concerns regarding agriculture in relation to World Trade Organization negotiations, and seeks to limit the degree of market opening required of developing countries.

BEAMS program

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in its pursuit of "Sustainable Development" of the coastal regions of India embarked upon a highly acclaimed & flagship program **Beach Environment & Aesthetics Management Services (BEAMS)** which is one of the initiatives under ICZM approach that the MoEF&CC has undertaken for the sustainable development of coastal regions of India.
 - This is implemented with a prime objective to protect and conserve the pristine coastal and marine ecosystems through holistic management of the resources.
- This was aimed for achieving the globally recognized and the coveted International eco-label "Blue Flag", accorded by International Jury comprising of members from IUCN, UNWTO, UNEP, UNESCO etc. FEE Denmark conduct regular monitoring & audits for strict compliance of the 33 criteria at all times.
 - A waving "Blue Flag" is an indication of 100% compliance to these 33 stringent criteria and sound health of the beach.
- The objective of BEAMS program is to abate pollution in coastal waters, promote sustainable development of beach facilities, protect & conserve coastal ecosystems & natural resources, and seriously challenge local authorities & stakeholders to strive and maintain high standards of cleanliness, hygiene & safety for beachgoers in accordance with coastal environment & regulations.

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YOJANA

INDEX

1. Fighting Femicide
2. Menstruation - A Human Issue
3. Ground Experiences
4. SHG-led Women Empowerment
5. Women in India's Toy Industry
6. Women at MSME Workplace
7. Innovating Breast Cancer Screening
8. Women Excelling in Sports: Psychological Aspects
9. Women in Uniform
10. Making of the Administrators
11. Gender Justice
12. Girl Child Protection
13. Gender Diversity in PSUs

APTI PLUS

Fighting Femicide

Background

- Gender inequality remains at large throughout India. Women face widespread social, cultural, and economic discrimination within the family as well as in the wider community.
 - The ongoing pandemic has affected women more than anything else.
- Violence Against Women (VAW)** is a growing concern throughout the region and within South Asia, which is home to one-fifth of the world population, violence, or the risk of violence, permeates every aspect of women's lives from birth to death.

Different Aspects of Gender related Violence

- Femicide and** The term femicide was originally defined as the killing of women but has been adapted over time to represent the act of killing women because of their gender.
 - In this sense, femicide is understood to be motivated by misogyny and prejudice against women.
 - For a case to be considered femicide there must be an implied intention to carry out the crime and a demonstrated connection between the crime and the gender of the victim.
- Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence is prevalent across India and is widely accepted as a legitimate part of family life by both women and men.
 - The most recent *National Family Health Survey* found that in India 34% of women between the ages of 15-49 have experienced violence at some point since they turned 15 and that 37% of married women have experienced violence.
- Dowry Deaths:** Dowry is a cultural tradition in which the family of the bride gives cash and presents to the family of the groom.
 - It was originally meant to support new couples beginning their married life.
 - However, India's prevailing patriarchy as well as rising economic demands have turned dowry into a commercial transaction that is underpinned by socio-economic standing and reinforces the financial dependency of women on their husbands.
 - According to NCRB reports, on average, every hour a woman succumbs to dowry deaths in India with the annual figure rising upwards to 7000.
- Sex-selective abortions :** It is a particularly insidious form of violence because it prevents girl children from being born purely because they are girls. The practice of sex-selective abortions is growing throughout the region.

Response to Gender related Violence

- New laws and policies as well as growing support from law enforcement agencies and civil society groups are empowering women to seek assistance in the case of violence and abuse. Furthermore, efforts are being made to improve the implementation of legislation that is helping to increase the rate of conviction and reducing the prevalence of gender-related crimes.
 - The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** bans the request and payment of the dowry of any form as a precondition for marriage.
 - Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCIPNDT) Act, 1994** prohibits the use of prenatal technologies to determine the sex of a foetus and several states have launched vigilance cells to curb incidences of female foeticide.
 - There is no legislation directly addressing honour killings and currently, the crime is dealt with under the *Indian Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code*.
 - Women's organisations have also worked to educate women on their rights and provide support to those who have experienced violence.
 - The reservation of 33% of seats in India's local government increased women's political participation and has led to more gender friendly governance. However, in the year 2020, India ranked 142 among 193 countries in terms of the percentage of women in Parliament.

Issues

- While legislation may protect victims of violence in theory in many cases the penalties outlined within the legislation are weak. Furthermore, the implementation of these laws remains limited and in many cases ineffective in preventing femicide or prosecuting the perpetrators of this violence.

- A lack of commitment to ending VAW at the political level is evident across India and is preventing substantive action at the legislative, policy, and programmatic level.
 - The governments must be held to account for its failure to effectively address femicide or ensure women's rights.
- Furthermore, efforts must be made to encourage and support governments to develop effective and comprehensive approaches to femicide.

Approaches Required

- **Legislation for Violence against Women:** The development of legislation and legal frameworks for addressing femicide is an important step in tackling violence against women and strong legislation is vital for holding perpetrators of violence to account for.
 - To achieve the desired objective, adequate funding and proper monitoring is also required.
- **Sensitisation of Police Personnel:** In many cases the lack of training amongst law enforcement agencies means that police have little understanding of violence against women legislation, are unaware of their duties in responding to cases of violence, and are influenced by social structures of gender bias and discrimination when responding to crimes.
 - Efforts must be made to sensitise police policies and processes related to the handling of violence cases.
 - Protocols must be developed so that police officers know how to respond when women report crimes and appropriate monitoring systems must be established to ensure these protocols are being followed.
- **Increase in Support Services for Women:** There is inadequate support available for women who experience violence and in many cases their lack of resources means they are forced to endure ongoing violence.
 - Support programmes can strengthen infrastructure by increasing shelter homes and improving medical facilities.
 - This infrastructure ensures that women who wish to leave violent situations have safe alternative accommodation, medical services, and social-support services.
- **Addressing Patriarchy:** Femicide cannot be fully addressed without tackling the widespread patriarchy and misogyny that permeates much of Indian society.
 - Strong efforts must be made to engage with local communities, build connections with community leaders, and to develop education programmes on women's rights.
 - These programmes will inform women of their rights and the services that are available to them in the case of violence.
 - They will also educate men on the consequences of committing violence and will demonstrate that this behaviour is both socially unacceptable and a breach of the law.

Conclusion

- More and more Indian women are emerging as educated, independent citizens and are paving the way for a new gender-friendly India.
- The rise in violence against women and femicide can be seen, in part, as a response to this change and as an attempt to reassert traditional power structures.
- However, strong efforts are being made to educate communities on the importance and benefits of women's rights and women are becoming more empowered to seek assistance from NGOs and law enforcement agencies.
- With further action and support from the government and civil society, Indian women will overcome this growing violence and become an increasingly influential part of society.

Menstruation - A Human Issue

Background

- Recently, In India, menstruation and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) have evolved in a big way to find a space and voice on the policy level as well as in mainstream cinema. On the other hand, to a layperson, it still is a basic biological function for the menstruator, and thus their personal problem.
- This gap between the top public policy and ground-level realities around menstruation also points to the need for a more comprehensive look at the issue, beyond the access and availability of menstrual products.
- We all know that menstruation is a taboo, perpetuated by a culture of shame and silence among women and girls who menstruate and are unable to manage their menstruation in a healthy and dignified way.

- Finding solutions for this vast and complex majority calls for seeing menstruation as a human issue rather than a woman's issue and to acknowledge its inter-sectionality with poverty, gender inequality, public health, disasters, climate change, development, and infrastructure.
- More importantly, as a human issue, it calls for acknowledging its deep connection with human dignity, agency, and voice of the most missed out menstruators and their related issues.

Ground Experiences

Background

- Gender equality is a basic human right, and it is also fundamental to have a peaceful, prosperous and egalitarian world. Extreme manifestations of gender/sexual violence have their roots in everyday patriarchal discrimination and discourses that cut across professional, educational, governmental and social institutions.
- Women often face many difficulties and lack of freedom within their family, community, and patriarchal society.
 - These patriarchal norms have restricted women's mobility, access to education, healthcare and even a life of dignity and equality.

Issues

- Women or girls who experience violence or are victims of abject social situations most often do not even have a source of help or a place to go to seek refuge.
- Even though the country's legislations protect women and girls, the implementation and the enforcement of these laws at the grassroots is frail.
- Violence against Women and girls has been deeply rooted in stereotypes and social models that accept violence.

Remedial Approach

- **Empowerment:** A key part of empowerment comes through education, skill building, employment, healthcare and decision making.
 - It has been observed that women and girls who are educated, and have enough support and pursue a meaningful career, contribute to the country's economy in later life.
 - Women empowerment is the key to political stability, economic growth, gender equality and social transformation.
- **Equal participation and equal representation** of women in political spaces can enable them to put forward their concerns and challenges, therefore benefitting all women.

Way Forward

- The need of the hour is to strategies interventions that are intersectional and inter sectoral, democratic and participatory, inclusive and non-discriminatory, grounded in research and science, creative and artistic, and make sensitivity and care their cornerstone.
- Women empowerment is impossible to achieve without actively engaging men, youth and adolescents in the journey to bring equality and carry forward the work.
- It is with these intentions and principles in mind that each of the interventions is designed, and they come together in unison to provide dignity to women and ensuring gender equality.

SHG-led Women Empowerment

Introduction

- SHGs are voluntary associations of economically poor, usually drawn from the same socio-economic background and who resolve to come together for a common purpose of solving their issues and problems through self-help and community action.
- Government of India has drawn several policy measures to achieve "gender equality" and "gender empowerment".
 - One of such measures is the promotion and economic activation of Self-Help groups (SHGs).

Background

| Sl No | Time | Details |
|-------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | 1984 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of social mobilisation and business development through organising Of SHGs was introduced based on <i>Prof. Yunus's 'Grameen Bank' model</i>. Initially, the <i>National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)</i>, along with empanelled Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) designed and developed the promotional ecosystem, including the SHGs-Bank linkage programme. |
| | 1990 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Reserve Bank of India recognised SHGs as an alternate credit flow model. ➤ Thus, there was a paradigm shift in the development banking in India, whereby SHGs were accepted as group-based clients of banks for both deposit and credit linkages, collateral-free lending, and lending to groups without specification of purpose/ project. |
| | 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Prof. S. R. Hashim committee</i> reviewed the poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India and recommended shifting focus from an individual beneficiary approach to a group-based business development approach. ➤ Hence, Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and its associated schemes were merged and a new scheme called '<i>Swamjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana</i>' (SGSY) was launched to provide self-employment to below the poverty line households through the formation of SHGs to bring them out of poverty during 1999 to 2011. |
| | 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Prof. R. Radhakrishna Committee</i> reviewed the performance of SGSY and suggested changes in its design from a 'top-down poverty alleviation' approach to a 'community-managed livelihood' approach. ➤ To do so there is a need for a sensitive support structure right from the National, State level to sub-district and block levels for inducing social mobilisation and building strong grassroots institutions with continuous nurturing support for 6-8 years. ➤ It was also felt that the underprivileged managed their livelihoods through a mix of activities, with different cash-flows, seasonality, and support requirements. ➤ The emphasis was also given to linking SHG members to social safety/ welfare schemes and programs. ➤ The need for institutionalisation of SHG movement was felt necessary. Thus, based on the Prof. Radhakrishna Committee recommendation, SGSY was restructured into <i>National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) by the Ministry of Rural Development</i> to provide a sharper and greater focus as well as momentum for poverty elimination on 9th December 2010. a. NRLM Mission was launched on 3rd June 2011. b. The complete transition of SGSY into NRLM was effective from 1st April 2013. c. The NRLM has been renamed as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY- RLM). |

Key Features of SHG

- The SHG movement follows five principles or 'Panchasutra' viz. Regular Meetings; Regular Savings; Regular Inter-Loaning; Timely Repayment of Loans; and Up-to-date books of Accounts.
- In addition, five additional principles now followed by SHGs are Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation; Education; Active involvement in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs); Access to Entitlements and Schemes; and Creating Opportunities for Sustainable Livelihoods.
- These taken together are called - 'Dashasutras' under DAY-NRLM.



Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Progress

- Self-help groups generate resources for the operation of their economic units through inter-loaning and bank credit linkage activities.
 - However, their occupational choices are often not in line with their ability to manage, operate and sustain their activities.
- There are mainly three central aspects of entrepreneurship as identified by classical economists:
 - a. Uncertainty and risk.
 - b. Managerial competence.
 - c. Creative opportunism or innovation.
- Thus, if the community business entities owned and operated by women SHGs are empowered they can ensure job and opportunities by effectively utilising available local resources and transform these resources into profitable products as per the local need and the acceptability of consumers.

DAY-NRLM & Empowering Process:

- The nucleus of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana -National Rural livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has been built around a basic human nature of the feeling of self-worth and the self-help.
- The scheme has rightly identified and underscored an unwavering and sustainable synergy between the financially deprived people and the formal financial institutions, stimulated through socially mobilised, small, cohesive, and informal SHGs.
- The empowerment of women in collectives like SHGs stands on four strong pillars
 - Social mobilisation, formation and promotion of sustainable institutions of the poor.
 - Universal financial inclusion.
 - Livelihoods capable to cope with vulnerabilities like debt bondage, food insecurity, Health Crisis and Migration.
 - Social Inclusion and Multiple Development Scheme Resources.

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Empowerment Parameters

- Universal Social Mobilization.
- Promotion of Institutions of the Poor.
- Training, Capacity Building & Skill Upgradation.
- Universal Financial Inclusion.
- Multiple Diversified Livelihood.
- Support Structure at the Community Level.
- Schematic Convergence.



Stepwise Financial Inclusion through SHGs

Issues and Challenges

- To sustain the SHG movement and make them competitive, there is a need for building a robust and stable community structure that is scalable across states.
 - This demands robust institution building and awarding a legal identity to the existing CLFs.
 - This too requires careful planning and contemplation.
- Most of the *State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)* are in the phase of transitioning and are considering the suitability of specific legislations to support the 3-tier structure of SHG federations.

Conclusion

- The village entrepreneurship development approach of DAY-NRLM is aimed at creating a catalytic local entrepreneurial ecosystem and encouraging the rural unemployed youth to take up local enterprises on their own.
 - Focus on mobilisation of more SHGs and taking their support services for creation and operation of rural farm and non-farm infrastructure would help improve rural livelihoods and income.
- The new and innovative rural enterprises scheduled to be established under DAY-NRLM have the potential to:
 - Ensure financial inclusion of SHGs and Farmers.
 - Increase household income.
 - Assure training, placements to the millions of rural youths.
- The potential would transform into reality provided several vital issues and constraints viz. social mobilization, promotion of institutions of the poor, training, capacity building, and skill upgradation, financial inclusion, multiple & diversified livelihoods, sensitive support structure, schematic convergence are addressed in a participatory manner in consultation with the stakeholders of DAY-NRLM.

Women in India's Toy Industry

Introduction

- Traditional Indian toys reflect the diversity of our nation - with raw materials, technology, design, and toy structure reflecting regional variations and cultural nuances.
- Given its labour-intensive nature, this industry has emerged as a major employer of female workers - offering mutually reinforcing pathways of empowerment for both the women workers and the sector as a whole.
- At one level, employment in the toy manufacturing sector offers its female-majority workforce avenues for socio-economic empowerment, financial security, and skill development.
 - At another, it also offers opportunities for women to act as agents of change by preserving local toy forms, intrinsic to their regions.

Background

- Toy manufacturing in India is as old as civilisation itself. With some of the earliest evidence of terracotta toys being found in Harappa (c. 2,500 BCE)- a key site of the Indus Valley Civilisation - it is remarkable to note that the history of toy manufacturing in India is inextricably linked to the larger story of India's past.
- Toy manufacturing continues to play a vital role in charting New India's growth story, with women at the fulcrum of this industry in present times.
 - According to a report by the *National Productivity Council*, India's toy industry employs three million workers, of which 70 per cent are women'.

Challenges and Opportunities

- India's domestic toy demand is predicted to grow at 10 to 15 per cent against the global average of 5 per cent. Such estimates promise strengthened avenues of female employment and women-led socio-economic growth within the sector.
- At the same time, the toy sector also faces certain challenges
 - a. It continues fragmented and mostly belonged to the Unorganised Sector.
 - b. Moreover according to the Toy Association of India, 75 per cent of domestic manufacturing originates in micro-industries, while 22 per cent comes from MSMEs.
 - Less than 3 per cent of the domestic toy manufacturing processes come from large units. Such an industrial spread underscores the need to organise the existing units into clusters to streamline manufacturing processes.
 - c. The retail value of the Indian toy market is INR16,000 crores of which close to three-fourths are Chinese imports.

Steps Taken

- The Government of India has undertaken many initiatives to mitigate these challenges while continuing to provide impetus to female employment in toy industry.
 - a. **In January 2021, it launched 'Toycathon', a hackathon for students, teachers, experts, and start-ups to develop toys and games based on Indian culture and ethos.**
 - To promote the indigenous toy manufacturing industry, this multi-Ministerial efforts ought to create an 'Aatmanirbhar' eco-system for local manufacturers by exploring their untapped potential.
 - Further, by involving students across schools and universities in the process, India's youth were made active participants in charting its growth trajectory.
 - Moreover, as part of this national effort to crowd source ideas, the Ministry of Women and Child Development emphasised the importance of the toy industry in ensuring women-led economic progress, while helping children understand the ethos of Indian culture through traditional toys.
 - b. Efforts towards the creation of manufacturing clusters have borne fruit. For instance, Koppal District in Karnataka has recently been recognised as the country's first toy manufacturing cluster.

Conclusion

- As India looks to build its *"Toyconomy"*, women workers will continue to play a significant role in fulfilling domestic demand, reducing imports, and raising India's share of toy manufacturing in the global marketplace.
- It is vital to promote female-led innovation in India's toy manufacturing industry, thereby empowering women to transform our nation's growth story while passing on a centuries-old legacy to New India.

Women at MSME Workplace

Introduction

- It is commonly accepted that an empowered woman is the real change maker for her family, her society, and her community.
 - The maturity of societies can be judged by the virtue of the status of women in that respective society.
- Though India has rich cultural and social legacies, there are some rituals which were imposed on the society by some powerful individuals.

- o The orthodox outlook towards women is something that led to social evils like gender discrimination and women-related crime.
- Only one thing has the potential to enhance the status of women in society and that is Empowerment of Women.

Women Empowerment and MSMEs

- The Government of India has taken up the Issue of Women Empowerment seriously and has created several schemes and programmes towards this issue.
 - o Motivating women entrepreneurship and the role of women at workplaces are two such elements.
- MSMEs being one of the largest employers in India, their role in motivating women's role in workplaces is critical.

Initiatives taken

- *The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) was launched on 8 March 2018 on the occasion of International Women's Day as NITI Aayog's flagship initiative.*
 - o WEP has pan India coverage and does not have state-specific programme/s.
 - o Registration on the portal and all subsequent services are provided free of cost for WEP users.
 - o WEP caters to both aspiring and well established women in the space of entrepreneurship.
- The *Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)* came forward to provide a Viability Fund to new start-ups, it has at the same time undertaken several initiatives to encourage and supplement the efforts of women Self-help groups.

Conclusion

- Women-led development will pave the way for Aatmanirbhar Bharat, especially in the MSME sector.
- India is a treasure trove of resources and has tremendous potential and capacity to encourage women entrepreneurs in micro and small businesses to help them sustain economic growth.

Innovating Breast Cancer Screening

Introduction

- Breast cancer affects women both in the developed and the developing world.
 - o As per WHO, breast cancer accounts for 2.09 million cases and 627000 deaths globally.
 - o It is the most common cancer in women in India and accounts for 14% of all cancers in women.
- It can occur at any age but the incidence rates in India begin to rise in the early thirties and peak at ages 50-64 years. As per the statistics, one in twenty-eight Indian women is likely to develop breast cancer during her lifetime.
- It is more for urban women than for the rural group.
- A report stated that cancer caused 5% of the total disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in the Indian population in 2016.

Background

- There is an unwillingness among women to come up for regular screening not only due to concerns over privacy, pain, and radiation exposure but also with associated stigma and lack of awareness.
 - o Cost and local availability of facilities are the other challenges for mass screening.

Breast Cancer Screening Device

- *Dr A. Seema* is a scientist at the Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (CC-MET), Thrissur, Kerala has recently received the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar-2018, from the President for her outstanding contributions to benefit women through science and technology including the development of a wearable device for breast cancer screening.
 - o It is a simple wearable device for screening breast cancer with which women are comfortable, ensures privacy, is absolutely painless, portable, and takes only around 30 minutes and can even be operated by ASHA workers.

Women Excelling in Sports: Psychological Aspects

Introduction

- Sports psychology plays a vital role in the sports training programme and deals with how various psychological states and traits influence sports performance.
 - This role is crucial in the sense that athletic success depends significantly on the willingness of sports performers to put in mental as well as physical efforts in pursuit of excellence.
- The situation of sports-women in general and especially during pandemic, has augmented the focus on psychological well-being, affecting their overall health and performance.
 - The experts in the field of sports have recognised that athlete can learn and improve the mental skills needed to achieve excellence in sports.

Psychological Aspects

- **Confidence** consistently appears as a key skill possessed by successful athletes, and international-level athletes have identified confidence as the most crucial mental skill defining mental strength.
- **Concentration**, or the ability to focus on the task at hand while ignoring distractions, is a vital determinant of successful performance in sport.
 - It has long been known that skilled athletes allow their minds to wander and find it difficult to stay in the present moment in competitive situations.
- **Mental toughness** is an individual's ability or a personality trait that is characterised by psychological ability to bounce back from negative outcomes or setbacks, and not letting the same negative aspects affect their performance or task at hand.
 - A mentally tough individual can display consistency and persistence even when she face difficult and challenging situations.
 - Mental toughness also allows an athlete to develop a sense of creativity and innovation as she practises more and more.
 - Mental toughness is one psychological component that cannot be trained and practiced without experience. It is a phenomenon which is encountered and experienced as one faces difficult situations in life and the game.

Conclusion

- Successful career of female athletes depends upon both physical ability and mental stability which are essential components of their successful sports performance.
- Positive goals, confidence, and concentration are closely related to Elite optimisation of a female athlete's sports performance and leadership for a successful path.
- As more women opt Sports in their careers, there is a need for psychological programmes to train them in order to balance their life by excelling in their fields.

Women in Uniform

Introduction

- India is an interesting case study when it comes to the role of women in society & the workplace. While legally, women have been granted and assured of the same rights as the male counterparts; socially and culturally, equality has been slow in coming.

Background

- **1950's:** The women of the generation were socialised and brought up to believe that their best career option was marriage and motherhood.
- Entering the workforce was even frowned upon and considered less than ideal and very few brave souls of this generation ventured to devote themselves to a career.
- In contrast, the Gen Xers, who were born in the 1960s and 1970s, grew up as a transitional generation. They strove for both successful marriages and sterling careers.
- Born in the 1980s and 1990s, Millennial males are much more open-minded and reject the rigid, traditional gender roles and pigeonholing of gender-based choice of careers.

- Millennial females have been raised to believe that it is not only their right to aspire to careers but they must contribute and participate in Nation building.

Conclusion

- To achieve true gender parity, we must condemn chauvinism and feminism alike. It is not a war of the sexes that we seek. Rather, the need of the hour is for all men and women to come together in unity, assuring equality and justice to all.

Making of the Administrators

Introduction

- The Administrative service is responsible for the public administration of the government of the country, except legislative, judiciary, and military.
 - It is composed mainly of career civil servants hired on professional merit rather than appointed or elected, whose institutional tenure typically survives transitions of political leadership.
- A civil servant is a person employed in the public sector by a government department or agency or public sector undertakings.
 - Civil servants work for central government and state governments.
 - These administrators play a crucial role in the functioning of the governments and the delivery of services to the citizens.

Background

- The present system of civil services was created by the British to serve their imperial interests. It was established as the *Imperial Civil Service (ICS)* to perform regulatory functions like maintaining law and order and generating revenue.
- The issue of continuing the Civil Service after independence was hotly debated in the Constituent Assembly and faced considerable opposition, particularly from the provincial governments.
 - However, in its favour, it was argued that when in the democratic set-up the political leadership was likely to change at periodic intervals, bureaucratic continuity and neutrality of civil servants, especially at the highest levels of policy-making and programme formulation, would be essential.
 - Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel strongly advocated for continuing the civil service, calling it 'the steel frame of India'.
- **Constituent Assembly incorporated Article 312 to constitute All India Services (AIS), with recruitment, based on all India competitive examination and dual control by the centre and the states.**
 - Significant changes were also visualised in the role of the Administrators.
 - It was no longer seen to be limited to the colonial role of revenue collection and enforcing law and order.
 - Welfare oriented Indian governments used the policy formulation and implementation capacities of these administrators to design and roll out many schemes in all domains of government viz. agriculture, industry, economy, education, health care and other social sectors.
 - The institution of civil services has worked along with the political leadership for the overall socio-economic development of the country.

Important Role of Civil Services

- a. Service presence throughout the country and strong binding character,
- b. The administrative and managerial capacity of the services,
- c. Effective policy-making and regulation,
- d. Effective coordination between institutions of governance,
- e. Leadership at different levels of administration,
- f. Service delivery at the cutting edge level,
- g. Providing 'continuity and change' to the administration.

Training of the Civil Servants

- Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) was established in Mussoorie in 1959 as the apex institute for training of higher civil services.
 - Newly recruited civil servants receive their initial Induction-level training in this institute.

- o The Academy also imparts continuing professional training through in-service courses to the officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) including middle to senior level officers through Mid-Career Training Programmes (MCTPs) at periodic intervals of their career.
- o In addition, the Academy conducts training courses for officers promoted to IAS from state civil services.
- After the probationary training, IAS probationers are sent on a three month central deputation to various ministries and departments for Vertical Integration.
 - o They are designated as Assistant Secretaries and are assigned important Desks on Desk office pattern and report to the respective Joint Secretaries.
- **The present system of training of IAS officers spans their entire careers. They are imparted three-phase Mid-Career Training Programmes (MCTPs) between 7-9 years, 14-16 years and 26-28 years respectively.**
 - o These are mandatory training programmes for promotions and career progression and are accordingly focussed on next-level competencies.

Recent Reforms in the Training of Administrators

- **Mission Karmayogi**: The Union Cabinet has approved the adoption of the New National Architecture for Civil Services Capacity Building called "Mission Karmayogi" in September 2020.
 - o It is a competency focussed training of officials using digital platforms that aims to transform the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional, and process levels.
 - o It is so designed that it remains entrenched in Indian culture and sensibilities while drawing learning resources from the best institutions and practices from across the world.
 - o *The Programme will be delivered by setting up an Integrated Government Online Training(iGOT) Karmayogi Platform.*
- **Aarambh** : 'Aarambh' is an initiative to bring all the probationers of All India Service, Group-A Central Services and Foreign Service together for a Common Foundation Course (CFC) to break the silos of services and Civil servant.
 - o It aims at making the civil servants capable leading the transformation and work seamlessly across departments and fields.
- **Common Mid-Career Training Programme (CMCTP)** : This scheme has been envisaged to break the silos among different civil services at the mid-career level in the form of the Common Mid-Career Training Programme (CMCTP).
 - o This programme aims at providing a common learning platform for officers belonging to different civil services.
 - o It will focus on the development of behavioural, functional, and domain level competencies.

Conclusion

- It is crucial that the government is focussing on the training and capacity building of public administrators holistically, identifying and addressing the real issues affecting the efficacy of existing training apparatus, and in turn affecting the performance and delivery of administrators.
- It is expected that such initiatives toward transforming civil services training are followed through, in real spirit, to help the administrators rising to the aspirations of the resurgent, Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Gender Justice

Background

- **The Supreme Court, in Air India v Nargesh Meerza**, found that Air India imposed three discriminatory restrictions and disabilities on women employees (air hostesses):
 1. They were not allowed to marry within four years from the date of entry into service.
 2. Their services were terminated on their first pregnancy.
 3. Age of retirement of hostesses was just 35 years, extendable to 45 years at the discretion of their Managing Director as against other govt. servants at 55/58 years.
- The Supreme Court upheld the first condition (i) in view of both parties' difficulties but struck down others as unreasonable and arbitrary.
- **In IFS Services Rules**, the permission of Govt. was required before the marriage of women officers, and married women were not allowed to join IFS. Hence, the Supreme Court quashed it outright.

- In Joseph Shine v Union of India, Supreme Court. (Dipak Misra, AM Khanwilkar RF Nariman, DY Chandrachud, & Indu Malhotra), decided in 2018 that 'the essentiality of the rights of women gets the real requisite space in the living room of individual dignity, rather than the space in an annexe to the main building Any system treating a woman with indignity, inequity and inequality, or discrimination invites the wrath of the Constitution ... and it is time to say that husband is not the master'.

Parameters

- **The Fifth National Family Health Survey (2019-20) talks of the following factors for the empowerment of women:**
 1. Ownership of physical assets-mobile phones, bank accounts, land & housing.
 2. Access to menstrual hygiene products (sanitary napkins etc.);
 3. Participation in Household Decision-making.
 4. Employment Status.
 5. Gender Violence.
 6. Under-18 Marriage.
 7. Educational Attainment for more than 10 years.
- Sustainable Development Goals, in addition to the above, takes into account the time spent on domestic or unpaid work decisions; (ii) decision on reproductive health; and (iii) incidence of female genital mutilation.

Development

1. *Share of women with more than ten years of schooling increased 5.5 per centage points during 2015-2020, the gender gap in this regard decreased from 11.5% to 8% in 2015-2020.*
2. *Sex ratio at birth in 2020 increased to 942*, though SDG is 954 females for every 1000 males by 2030 but only 928 in urban areas (against 947 in rural areas) due to sex determination tests.
3. **Share of women using hygienic methods increased from 60% to 78% (2015-2020).**
4. Due to PM Jan Dhan Yojana, *women's bank accounts increased by 28 per centage points (2015- 2020).*
5. Women's mobile phone ownership increased by 10 per centage points (2015-2020).
6. Share of married women employed and getting paid increased by 2% points to 28% during 2015-2020.
7. **Participation in household decision making increased marginally to 85%.**
8. In 11 out of 22 states, covered land or house ownership by women reduced in 2020.
9. Share of women marrying before 18 years is about 30% (both in 2015 and 2020).
10. Domestic violence stagnating-one in three women experience physical or sexual violence from their husbands, but during the Covid-19 lockdown it surged to 60%.
11. There is an increase in the use of family planning methods but its burden is still largely on women-female sterilisation accounting for 60% of total contraception usage.
 - o *Himachal Pradesh has the highest contraceptives prevalence rate.*
 - o Unmet needs were declined to less than 10% in most states except Meghalaya and Mizoram.
12. More than 2/3rds of children below 5 years are immunised fully in all states, except Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam.

Negatives

- Worsening trends due to complex interplay of policy, socio-cultural and political factors.
- a. *Share of Union Budget spent on women-related schemes has stagnated at about 5.5% since 2009*, and less than 30% of which is being spent on 100% women-focused schemes.
- b. **Spending of budget of Ministry of Women and Child Development on women empowerment decreased** from Rs. 640 crores in 2018-2019 to Rs 310 crores in 2019-2020.
- c. **Low conviction rate for early marriage-23.8% in 2018 and 84% cases pending in courts.**
 - In Tripura, child marriage increased from 33% to 40% in 2015-2020, in Manipur from 13.7% to 16.3%, and in Assam from 30.8% to 31.8%.
- d. Stunting of children rose in 11 states; wasting increased in 14 states; neo-natal mortality, IMR, and under 5 mortality rate increased in Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Bihar has the highest prevalence of NMR (34), IMR (47), and under 5 MR (56) across 22 states/ UTs surveyed.
 - Kerala has the lowest rates matching many developed countries- due to better allocation of the social sector.

Conclusion

- The level of progress and quality of democracy of any country may be assessed by knowing the contemporary status of women, as redistributive justice and participatory governance must ensure gender justice substantially.
- The Govt. of India has rightly enhanced the maternity period to 26 weeks to benefit 18 lakh women workers in the organised sector-this will ensure breastfeeding for at least six months initially, as well as pay for this period, will ensure nutritious food.
- As post-feminists rightly remark, for women, 'personal is political', hence, let us empower them in both public and personal arenas of life, along with genuine development.

Girl Child Protection

Background

- Child protection is a human rights issue, and it comes under the purview of the legislative framework.
- In 1989, an international agreement, '*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*' (UNCRC) was adopted, with 54 articles, that legally binds the governments of 196 countries to set out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child.
 - UNCRC proclaims that all children must be protected against kidnapping, violence, harmful work, sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.
 - **On 11 December 1992, India ratified UNCRC.**
- Despite promising legal frameworks, violence against children is rampant. The National Crime Record Bureau reported that in the year 2019 about 33.2 per cent of the total crime (IPC + SLL) was committed against children.

Issues

- Multidimensional poverty** poses a direct threat putting cracks on girls' safety in three major forms: discriminatory attitudes resulting in poor nutrition health care; housework and care burden; and exposure to violence.
- Gender power relations** endorse female victimisation and domestic violence which often takes the chronic and severe form of battering and withholding essential care.
- Son preference**, i.e., favouring boys' social, intellectual, and physical (including nutrition) well-being over that of girls, is widespread.
- Worldwide, children have suffered the devastating impacts of **Covid-19**, and further, the impacts are and will continue to vary by gender.
 - Socio-economic Impacts of COVID-19 are gendered, evident in the form of educational Inequality, sexual violence, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and increased household burden.
 - Covid-19 has worsened the risk of girls being trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- In the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science'**, scientists have warned about the increase in monsoon precipitation extremities and drought across India and South Asia.
 - Such climate change events impact women and girls disproportionately, posing a hindrance to India's SDG achievements specific to poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, water, and sanitation.

Initiatives Taken

- The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012**, is a landmark legislation that protects children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and the use of pornographic material for sexual offences against children.
 - Under the Act, special courts have been established to deal with these offences.
 - This Act has been amended on 6 August 2019, and the Central Government framed POCSO Rules, 2020. Another important legislation is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.
 - The Act seeks to safeguard the rights of children in conflict with the law, and those in need of care and protection.
- In 2009, the government launched a pioneer **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)** to build a protective environment for children in difficult circumstances through Government and Civil Society Partnership.
 - ICPS seeks the prevention of child rights violations, enhanced infrastructure and capacities, institutionalising essential services, and strengthening structures.

3. **National Tracking System for Missing and Vulnerable Children**, State Child Protection Societies District Child Protection Units, Juvenile Justice Boards, Special Courts, and Childcare Institutions (CCIs) are established across all States/UTs.
4. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme** was launched to tackle the declining sex ratio at birth, and to empower the girl child through education.
5. **In 2020, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights launched Standard Operating Procedure for Care and Protection of Children in Street Situations.**
 - Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 (Amendment Act, 2016); the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006; Juvenile Justice System 2019; and the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994 are some other important legislations.

Way Forward

- a. Educate families about the detrimental impacts of the household burden on young girls. Enable families to empower their daughters through education and other household decision-making.
- b. Overcome gender bias in education.
- c. Launch stringent measures to eliminate child marriage.
- d. Build a safe environment for girls through promoting to child safeguarding practices in community, neighbourhood, family, and school- enhance systems for reporting violence. Form community networks of Endnotes whistle-blowers.
- e. Educate and Empower girl child on their rights.
- f. Prioritise early childhood period.
- g. Lead advocacy, campaigns, and activism to echo girl child protection and Zero Tolerance for heinous crimes against minor girl child.
- h. Develop capacities of human resources and systems for child-care protection.
- i. Educate girls about cyber safety.
- j. A gendered approach to disaster risk mitigation.
- k. Empower young girls to act on climate change.

Gender Diversity in PSUs

Background

- Gender diversity continues to be low in the Central Public Sector Undertakings. Recent data indicates that even in Maharatna PSUs, which are considered the best entities among public sector organisations, the strength of women employees is very low, only 5% to 9% of the total employees.
- With the global focus on understanding the linkage between gender and corruption, and how the gender dimension can be included in the anti-corruption policies, this is the right time for other PSUs to think along these lines.

Recent Findings

- In August 2017, **Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE)** (an apex body of 201 PSUs representing mainly Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in India) in collaboration with the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) of the International Labour Organization, conducted a study on Women in Leadership and Management in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in India.
 - o Its main findings were that the number of women applicants and/or recruits at the entry-level is skewed as compared to men. This gets reflected at a higher level i.e. if fewer women are applying and entering an organisation, the number of women to choose from at a higher level is likely to be lower.
 - o Another prominent stereotype that emerged from this study was that men perceive women to be less enthusiastic to take up transfer postings, or serve long at field site locations due to family responsibilities.
 - o Men also felt that women are likely to lag in knowledge of skill development due to career breaks for maternity or child care.
- In PSUs, promotions at higher levels are not time bound; at higher levels, employees apply for promotions against vacancies. These vacancies are usually of sites or field offices generally located in remote areas.
 - o For women employees, such far-off postings may come at a time when they are making critical life cycle choices (such as getting married, pregnancy, giving birth, raising a child, and so on), and hence they forgo promotions.

- o Women also feel that they may get left out despite being meritorious as they do not socialise informally with seniors in the organisation.
- The two most influential factors that stand out in women's career advancement include: women's confidence and self-belief, and 'organisational opportunities' supporting women in their professional development and career growth.

Committee on Women Empowerment in PSUs

- A committee was constituted in NTPC Ltd, (one of the Schedule 'A' Maharatna CPSEs) wherein concrete recommendations were sought on increasing the intake of women in PSUs, Equal Employment Opportunity Policy for improving working conditions, and other parameters to bring about a conducive environment for effective functioning of women.
 - a. The committee noted that the average percentage of women employees in these Maharatnas in the last 3 years is only 7.4%.
 - o The percentage of women in these PSUs ranges from a mere 5.7% to 9.5%.
 - b. The number of women Directors was very low in almost all PSUs, and several of them did not have a single woman Director.
- This gives a picture that women are not able to reach the top rungs of hierarchy in the Public Sector and take up leadership positions.

Recommendations

- The committee gave its recommendations relating to Recruitment, Promotion, Training, Work and Performance, Gender sensitisation, and for specific Policy Interventions to bring about structural changes in the system:
 - a. **Recruitment**
 - o All selection may be purely based on test scores and interviews may be avoided.
 - o In case interviews are part of the selection procedure, a woman representative may invariably be a member of the selection committee.
 - o Adequate endeavors to hire more women in lateral induction.
 - o Increased Upper age limit for women employees or have fixed-term induction to facilitate more women opting for a career may be considered.
 - b. **Mentoring and Training**
 - o In all training programs conducted by PSEs, a pro-rata percentage of women employees of that PSE may be nominated for equal opportunity.
 - c. **"Gender Sensitisation"** may be included in induction and mid-career training as a compulsory module and steps may be taken to impart training on this subject to all employees.
 - d. **Internal Complaints Committee** must be constituted in any place where there are more than 10 employees, irrespective of their gender.
 - e. All promotion committees must have a woman member. If a suitable person is not available, she may be co-opted from another organisation/Govt.
 - f. **Basic hygiene facilities** like washrooms/restrooms at all work-places irrespective of the fact that women employees are posted at the location or not must be ensured.
 - o In fields areas, facilities for change rooms and toilets should be good.

Way Forward

- There is potential among women that needs to be harnessed by providing them opportunity.
- Gender diversity is perhaps not being given due importance in PSUs, and to address this, structural changes will be required to be made.

KURUKSHETRA

INDEX

1. Rural Product Marketing and Brand Management.
2. Effective Marketing through Rural Collectives.
3. Rural Marketing Infrastructure.
4. Rural Marketing: Concepts and Opportunities.
5. Communication Strategies in Rural Marketing.
6. Panchayati Raj: Present Status and Future Prospects.
7. Agricultural Marketing Strategies during COVID-19.
8. Leveraging ICT in Rural Marketing.

APTI PLUS

Rural Product Marketing and Brand Management

Introduction

- Rural marketing and rural product marketing play a prominent role in a country like India where more than 65 % of the population lives in rural areas.
 - There is a significant difference in the standard of living, taste and preferences between rural and urban consumers.
- In order to market rural products, we have to understand the dynamics of both rural and urban consumers and develop a customized marketing and branding strategies for these categories of segments.
- The objective of this article is to highlight the rural product marketing and branding strategies to achieve its fullest potential in the Digital India by addressing obstructions and opportunities for Marketing of rural products.

About Rural Marketing

- **Rural marketing** primarily view population as consumers, whereas **Rural product marketing** focuses mainly on marketing of the products manufactured by rural population.
 - It involves the process of developing, pricing, promoting, distributing products and services primarily to rural consumers.
 - However, a significant by-product of agriculture and allied -sector are primarily sold to the nearby rural areas.

Background

- Many companies who manufacture pesticides, FMCG products, consumer durables, etc., have succeeded in their efforts to tap the rural markets by fulfilling the needs of the rural consumers.
 - Based on these experiences, rural marketing may be viewed as a successful effort.
- However, the rural product marketing has not resulted into a similar growth trajectory even after a continued efforts and support from the governments.
 - Therefore, it is important to understand the roadblocks and develop contextualized marketing strategies for rural products.

Issues and Challenges

- **Fragmented Landholding Leading to lower Scale of production:** The average landholding size of household is very low (approximately 1.0 hectare). Selling this surplus produce at a remunerative price becomes a challenge, more so when there are limited numbers of efficient aggregators.
- **Seasonal Production:** Seasonality of agriculture and allied produce creates gluts during harvest seasons and scarcity during lean seasons, thus affecting consistency in supply.
- **Scattered Production Centres:** Rural production centres are highly dispersed and requires a lot of efforts on aggregation, organization and communication among stakeholders.
- **Low Demand in Rural Areas**
- **Limited Access to Remunerative Market in Urban Areas:** Due to lack of information about the remunerative market, perishable nature of produce and non-availability¹ of low cost storage facility in the nearby region, rural producers have to rely on various intermediaries (viz. formal as well as informal) or selling their produce for consumption the urban market.
- **Transportation and Warehousing**
- **Ineffective Distribution Channels:** Due to scattered production, there is a requirement of context centric customized distribution channel.
 - Due to lack of proper infrastructure, producers have no option but to depend on these agencies for selling their products.
- **Lack of Awareness and literacy about Remunerative Market:** Limited use of digital technology, government schemes and incentives including access to cheap financing options also hinders the pace of rural product marketing.
- **Many Languages and Diversity in Culture:** It also limits the rural sellers to seamlessly operate in all markets.
 - This limitation coupled with poor resources and infrastructure also restricts their mobility and product marketing efforts.

Probable Steps to overcome the challenges

- **Emphasis on Aggregation**
 - Marketers may leverage contract farming, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Cooperatives etc., so that localized aggregation could be done in a cost-effective manner.
 - Government of India is also promoting these institutions to promote the sales of rural products.
 - The marketers can invest in awareness generation among rural producers for setting up of such organizations.
 - **Creating localized market through Rural Marts**
 - Promoting setting up rural marts as rural areas also happen to be a market for the rural products.
 - In this direction, the state of Sikkim has introduced social processes to collectivize production and marketing. They will not have to wait for the weekly bazaars or haats.
 - **Promoting Collaborations with Commercial Organizations:** Government should also promote incentive driven collaborations so that more such capable institutions foray into rural product marketing.
 - These incentives could be in the forms of lower interest rates, exemption certain taxes, consideration of some portion of such investments as CSR funds etc.
 - **Emphasis on New Product Development:** Emphasis must be given on developing new technologies and adoption of these technologies for creating a diversified portfolio of rural products.
 - Use of such technologies to convert non-usable Agri-wastes into aesthetically appealing products such as handicrafts, developing sustainable and environment friendly packaging materials etc., could be useful for rural product marketing.
 - **Skilling Rural Workforce:** Educational Institutions and Universities imparting business management education can be roped in for the same.
 - Such skilling efforts will help in providing well trained, relatively low-cost and attitudinally aligned workforce to organizations and further improve the viability of rural product manufacturing and marketing efforts.
 - **Communication and Promotion of Rural Products:** All channels of communication and promotion viz. TV, FM Radio, cinema and point of purchase advertising, audiovisual publicity vans, events like melas, festivals, fairs, dance and drama shows, temple festivals, regional celebrations, group meetings etc., may be used depending upon the target segment.
 - Use of local language should also be context and region specific.
- a. Digital and online marketing

b. Direct marketing.

c. Good Branding - Rural products.

Rural Product Marketing Strategies

- **Product Strategy:** Low price, high quality and multiple uses are some of the basic considerations for rural product design in addition to other features like nutrition, medicinal feature etc.
- **Pricing Strategy:** Optimum pricing strategy should be followed as per the nature of the product and quality.
- **Promotion Strategy:** The challenge is to create communication that would help the rural urban consumers in recognizing brands, logos visuals and colors.
- **Product Placement and Distribution strategies:** Physical collection, distribution, managing logistics and controlling marketing communication are major impediments for marketing of rural products.

Challenging in Rural Branding

1. Deprived markets and Deprived People in Rural Areas
2. Multi-linguistic Customer Base
3. Low Literacy
4. Difficulty in Understanding Brand as an Asset
5. Maintaining the Relevancy and Consistency is Difficult
6. Branding is a Costlier Affair.

Way Forward

- In spite of multiple issues and roadblocks, growing demand for rural products provides a good opportunity for producers as well as marketers to tap this potential.

- o Multipronged strategies of product development, pricing, promotion and distribution will be required to encash the growing market for rural products.
- Use of Geographic Indication (GI) tags: The sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess origin-based qualities and reputation in the region help largely in promoting the rural product brand.
- Creating brand Ambassadors by the Government: Unlike other FMCG products to promote branding in agriculture, the Government should utilize the top Government Officials (especially IAS Officers) and Ministers as Brand Ambassadors.

Effective Marketing through Rural Collectives

Introduction

- India's economic policies have always highlighted the importance of raising farmers' income through
 - o Product and productivity growth.
 - o Systemic and quick disposal of their marketable surplus.
- A number of measures recently implemented by the government are directed not only to increase production and productivity, but also to ensure smooth and enhanced marketability and proper price discovery for farm profits and income of farmers through improvement of existing marketing infrastructure in rural areas.
 - o However, the agrarian community is yet to taste the benefits of increased productivity due to the challenges posed from climate, agricultural market and trade domain in the globalised context.
 - o Further, lack of capital asset endowments in rural areas compels the farmers to sell their primary produce at throwaway prices to the middlemen and commission agents.

Background

- Prominent Agri-market infrastructure creating initiatives have been directed towards
 - a. Connecting more mandis through **National Agriculture Market Scheme (e-NAM)**.
 - b. Developing rural haats into **Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)**.
 - c. Creation and utilisation of **Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund**.
 - d. Linking rural markets through **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** roads.
 - e. Developing cluster based Agri-products for better demand-supply management of Agri-produce.

Rural Collectives

- The rural collectives aim at creating sustainable and profitable local livelihood opportunities.
 - o Producer Groups (PG)/Self-Help Groups (SHG)/Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)/ Cooperatives need to focus not only on strengthening livelihood value chains in rural areas, but also to create vibrant marketing facilities like storage centres / collection centres at the cluster level, mini storage centres at the village level, and nano-packaging units.

Issues and Challenges

1. **Handling Marketable Surplus** : Collectives like SHGs, Cooperatives and FPOs have the potential in effectively handling and managing marketable surpluses of agricultural and allied sector for the common good.
2. **Technology and Innovation** : The digital innovations and solutions have tremendous applicability in agri-infrastructure development, supply chain management and technology facilitation in the areas of quality, logistics and distribution of agri-value chain.
3. **Create Marketing Channels** : Collective efforts are required to develop competitive market channels through the existing network of SHGs/FPOs/Cooperatives in rural as for agricultural and allied products.
4. **Inviting Investments** : Collectives can tie up with national and global entrepreneurs and angel investors, and open ways and means to incentivise private as well as cooperative sectors to make investments for creating modern markets and for ensuring a feasible and transparent marketing environment at the grass-root.
5. **Awareness on Marketability** : Awareness generation campaigns, sensitisation workshops and basic-orientation programmes through FPOs/SHGs/Cooperative members about processing and marketing of processed produce can help generating more income for the farmer members of such collectives.
6. **Storage Capacity Constraints** : Collectives with their cumulative and group efforts are adept in promoting creation of scientific storage capacity for storing farm produce, processed farm produce and agricultural inputs etc. so as to reduce post-harvest & handling losses.

Recent Approach

- a. **FPO/co-operative marketing infrastructure** : Indian agriculture, witnesses high price spread in agri-commodities which adversely impacts the producer as well as the consumer. This is due to the ever presence of exploitation and manipulation in agri-markets.
 - o Thus, the strengthening and revival of existing **co-operative marketing system** in agriculture would not only eliminate excessive dependence on agents and intermediaries but also ensure appropriate price discovery.
- b. **National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)** : e-NAM integrates physical wholesale mandis of different States and Union Territories and facilitates agri-commodity trade on an online platform.
 - o It ensures transparent price discovery and enables farmers to realise remunerative prices for their marketable surplus.
 - o Free registration facilities are there for farmers on e-NAM Portal.
 - o Agri-produce is sold through online, transparent and competitive bidding methods which ensure better price discovery of agri-produce.
- c. **Agri-Value Chain Infrastructure** : SHG/Cooperative/FPO units are generating resources for operation of their economic units through inter-loaning and bank credit linkage activities.
 - o However, their occupational choices are often not commensurate with their ability to manage, operate and sustain their activities.
 - o Community financial institutions like SHGs, Cooperatives and FPOs besides delivering credit at the door-step can play the role of market information centres and become major stakeholders in the agri-value chain.
- d. **Contract Framing and Marketing by Collectives**: In comparison to individual farmers, co-operatives/FPOs/SHGs can reap the benefits of lower input costs, stability and longevity of contract farming arrangements and can ensure a fair distribution of profits amongst the member farmers.
 - o Further, community producer organisations have the desired potential for balancing the complex dynamics between firms and farmers through collective bargaining, creation and maintenance of long-term relationships with input venders and logistic support providers and through timely mitigating risk and uncertainties faced by the farmers.

Way Forward

- Marketing of farm produce has traditionally been channelled through a network of agricultural markets, predominated by Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) regulated markets.
- The need of the hour is to put in place better farmer-market linkages. This can be achieved through a concerted collective effort at the local level by developing and up-grading large and varied agriculture marketing infrastructure in the country.
- The real challenge before us is how to sensitise these collectives on governance, organisational skills, team spirit of work, interpersonal communication, work allocation, payment/transaction, market systems, supply chain etc. so that the efficiency in rural market systems are maximised and rightful benefits of value addition and quality price discovery of agri-products are ensured for the participating players of rural markets.
- Reliable, efficient, competitive and accessible market with adequate post-harvest and marketing infrastructure have the potential in generating net positive returns to the farmer producers.

Rural Marketing Infrastructure

Introduction

- Rural products can be categorised into two - agricultural and non-agricultural.
 - a. **Agricultural products** include all kinds of farm produce and dairy products, egg, wool, meat, fish and so on.
 - b. **Non-agricultural products** of rural origin are a vast variety of handmade and artisanal products such as handmade textiles and garments, crafts, articles made of leather, wood, metals and alloys.

Constraints

- a. **Physical access** : While rural producers find it difficult to take their products to markets, they are also challenged in accessing different inputs such as tools, machines, spare parts, services, chemicals and so on, which are produced in industrial clusters but need to be used at the place of production.
 - b. **Transport**: For any rural produce to reach the consumer markets, or for consumers and channel members to reach rural markets, year-round connectivity and transport is essential.
- Poor means of transport mean loss of quality and quantity in transit.

- c. **Electricity:** Lack of reliable and efficient power supply affects production, especially scaling up operations or improving productivity.
- d. **Communication:** Often, rural producers do not have information about changing customer preferences, as also skills of marketing.
 - o Information about products, prices consumer preferences, market environment, competitors, alternative and substitute products is essential for any marketing plan.
 - o **Access to Internet** through broadband is thus, another constraint that rural producers and marketers face.
- e. **Small quantities available for sale :** More than 80 percent of India's farmers are small and marginal with little Individual, but collectively sizeable surplus for the market.

Recent Initiatives

1. **The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):** It is an important programme of the Government of India, implemented with contribution from State governments, with the aim of providing rural connectivity through roads.
 - o One of the main objectives of this initiative is to connect habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), higher secondary schools and hospitals.
2. **The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) :** It was Implemented by Ministry of Power.
 - o Under DDUGJY, agricultural and non-agricultural feeders are separated in rural areas, followed by strengthening and enhancing transmission and distribution, besides subsuming rural electrification targets of the erstwhile **Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGVY)**.
 - o An amount of Rs. 3600 crore was allocated to DDUGJY in the Union Budget of 2021-22.
3. **Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI):** The scope of the scheme has been extended to allied sectors such as livestock poultry and forest produce.
 - o There are also been a marked reference to Farmer Producer Organisations FPOs, as also to advance marketing activities such as futures trading and negotiable warehouse electronic receipt financing.
4. **Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) scheme:** With an objective to support agricultural marketing in rural areas, the Government of India introduced the Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) scheme to develop retail markets near the **rural periodic markets or haats**, which would also serve the purpose of aggregation and turn into feeder markets for APMCs.
5. **Digital Infrastructure :** Government of India launched the **National Optic Fibre Network in 2011**, which was renamed as **Bharatnet project in 2015**.
 - o The Union Budget of 2021-22, allocated Rs.6806 crore to Digital India programme, out of which Rs. 300 crore is allocated to **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan**.
6. **The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) :** It was launched by Government of India and its aims are
 - Development of skills.
 - Promotion of apprenticeship.
 - Development of entrepreneurship.
 - Apprenticeship and training.
 - Skill acquisition and knowledge awareness for livelihood promotion.
 - Skill strengthening for industrial value enhancements.
7. **Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations:** The Union Budget of 2019-20 announced a **Central scheme of "Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations"**, with a target of forming 10,000 FPOs in the country, between 2019-20 and 2023-24.
 - o These FPOs were promoted by the Government NABARD, State Governments, and Civil Society Organisations.
8. **Dastkar Sashaktikaran Yojana:** Ministry of Textiles launched this scheme **for handicrafts**.
 - o It focuses on developing self-help groups, artisan groups or cooperatives in clusters where artisans are located.
 - o The Union Budget of 2021-22 allocated Rs.495.32 crore and Rs.357.50 crore to **National Handloom Development Programme and National Handicraft Programme** was respectively.

Way Forward

- Although there have been a lot of initiatives with the objective of developing a robust rural marketing infrastructure, understanding consumers and their changing tastes and preferences is a dynamic proposition and hence specialised and professional approach.

- **Public investment in developing rural marketing** is making significant difference by providing the most vital element of marketing, which is accessibility.
- While the issue of physical access is being addressed by Government schemes on roads and electricity, investments in digital infrastructure have the potential to bring consumers and producers in direct contact in a virtual mode.

Rural Marketing: Concepts and Opportunities

Introduction

- Rural India accounts for about 50 % of India's gross domestic product (GDP) and are home to nearly 70 % of the country's population.
 - Agriculture, and thereby agricultural marketing and allied commercial activities, continues to be the mainstay of life for majority of the Indian population.
- However, vagaries of nature, demand supply mismatches, infrastructure bottlenecks such as transport constraints, limited storage capacity, inability to access lucrative markets and get remunerative prices has proved to be huge constraints as far as development of the Rural Market is considered.

Government Initiatives

1. **Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF)** : AtmaNirbhar Bharat-Agriculture includes comprehensive market reforms a creation of 'Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF)' worth RS.1.00 lakh crore.
 - In union budget 2021-22, allocation to Micro irrigation Fund has been doubled to Rs. 10,000 crore and institutional credit has been increased to Rs.16.50 lakh crore.
2. **Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)**: It has two sub-schemes
 - a. **Marketing Research and Information Network (MRIN)**: It has coverage of 3356 markets spread all over the country having coverage of more than 300 commodities.
 - b. **Strengthening of Agmark Grading Facilities (SAGF)**: Objective is to support framing of grade standards and quality certification of agricultural commodities to help farmers get better and remunerative prices for their graded produce.

The scheme was introduced keeping in mind the following objectives :

- a. Promote creation of agricultural marketing infrastructure by providing backend subsidy support to state, cooperative and private sector investments.
 - b. Promote creation of scientific storage capacity and to promote pledge financing to increase farmers' income.
 - c. Promote Integrated Value Chains (confined up to the stage of primary processing only) to provide vertical integration of farmers with primary processors.
 - d. Establish a nation-wide information network system for speedy collection and dissemination of market information and data on arrivals and prices for its efficient and timely utilisation by farmers and other stake holders.
 - e. Catalyse private investment in setting up of agribusiness projects and thereby provide assured market to producers and strengthen backward linkages of agri-business projects with producers and their groups.
3. **APLM Act**: In order to provide better marketing facilities to the farmers, the government had released a new model "The Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2017 (APLM Act) for its adoption by States/Union Territories (UTs).
 - It promotes alternative marketing channels of private markets, direct marketing, etc., for farmers to market their produce at competitive and remunerative prices.
 4. **The State/ UT Agricultural Produce & Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion & Facilitation) Act, 2018**: In order to optimise the use of scarce resources and mitigate the uncertainty in price and marketing, the Government formulated and released this progressive and facilitative Model Act.
 - The Act covers the entire value and supply chain from pre-production to post harvest marketing including services contract for the agricultural produce and livestock.
 5. **National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Scheme**: The Scheme was launched on 14th April, 2016 with the objective of creating online transparent competitive bidding system to facilitate farmers with remunerative prices for their produce.
 6. **Kisan Rath Mobile App**: In 2020 Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare launched "KISAN RATH".
 - It a farmer friendly mobile application, to facilitate farmers in finding suitable transport vehicles for transportation of their agriculture and horticulture produce.

Steps taken for Augmenting Storage Capacity

- For creation of agricultural marketing infrastructure including scientific storage infrastructure, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** is implementing sub-scheme "**Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI)**" of **Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)**.
- The government is providing financial support under **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)** in terms of interest subvention and credit guarantee for projects for post-harvest management and building community farming assets such as warehouse, cold-storage, silos, e-marketing etc.
- The government is promoting storage facilities under scheme of **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana - Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied Sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR)**.
- It had been building more storage facilities for procurement purpose and for agriculture industry through agencies such as **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** and **Central Warehouse Corporation (CWC)**.

Steps taken for Support for Marketing of Allied Products

- Web portal (www.JaivikkhetLin)**: In order to promote organic products, this web portal has been created.
- It aims to encourage organic farming by directly connecting the farmers in the country to the consumers to get a better price for their products.
- The government is also providing marketing facilities to farmers under the schemes of **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)** and **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER)**.
- Institutional Support for Marketing and Development of Tribal Products/Produce**: The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides funds to TRIFED for marketing of tribal products by empanelling tribal suppliers comprising individual tribal artisans, tribal SHGs, organisations/ agencies/NGOs working with tribal, etc., under this scheme.
- Aadi Mahotsav** : TRIFED is engaged in direct sale of tribal products, including art & craft items through its network of Tribes India showrooms, exhibitions, **Aadi Mahotsav**.
- Online e-commerce portal**: Marketing is done through online e-commerce portal developed by TRIFED and also online retailers.
- Government e-Market place (GeM)**: To enable wider market for handloom weavers, steps have been taken to onboard weavers on **Government e-Market place (GeM)** to enable them to sell their products directly to various government departments and organisations.
- Handloom International Fair**: To promote marketing of handloom products, Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC) has been organising international fairs in virtual mode.

Way Forward

- Rural produce is not only about crop production; it also includes forest produce, handicrafts and handlooms made in tribal areas, far-flung areas in the North-East, which require access to markets to ensure adequate remuneration to the workforce involved in these activities.
- The Government of India has been trying to reform the agriculture marketing system so as to facilitate farmers to sell their produce at a better price.
- All these policies and programmes are being supported by higher budgetary allocations, non-budgetary financial resources by way of creating corpus funds, market reforms, Agri-Export Policy, promotion of FPOs and creation of agricultural marketing infrastructure.

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Communication Strategies in Rural Marketing

Introduction

- Rural Marketing is defined as a function that manages all activities involved in assessing, stimulating and converting the purchasing power of rural consumers into an effective demand for specific products and services, and moving these products and services to the people in rural areas to create satisfaction and a better standard of living and thereby achieving organisational goals.
 - It is also a process of developing, pricing, promoting, and distributing rural specific goods and services leading to a desired exchange with rural customers to satisfy their needs and wants, and also to achieve organisational objectives.

Constitution of a Rural Market

- Urban to Rural (U 2 R)** : It includes the transactions of urban marketers who sell their goods and services in rural areas, like pesticides, fertilisers, seeds, FMCG products, tractors, bicycles, consumer durables, etc.
- Rural to Urban (R 2 U)** : Transactions in this category basically fall under agricultural marketing where a rural producer seeks to sell his produce in an urban market, like seeds, fruits and vegetables, milk and related products, forest produce, spices, etc.
- Rural to Rural (R 2 R)** : This includes the activities that take place between two villages close to each other, like agricultural tools, handicrafts and bullock carts, dress materials, etc.

Historical Initiatives

- NIRDPR Delhi (erstwhile CAPART) set up its Marketing Division in 1989** to provide opportunities, exposure, and sustainable market linkages to rural producers covered under various income generation schemes of the Council and Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India.
- The SARAS mela** : It was an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development, under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.
 - It aims to bring the rural women SHG members formed under the said scheme on one platform to showcase their skills, sell their products and build linkages with potential market players and also, develop a market for themselves.
- An **Online mela Software (OMS)** was developed by the NIC to automate the **National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) Aajeevika Mela** activity for participation, stall distribution, and sales recording, etc.
- State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM): Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)**, in the implementation of NRLM within the state, has set up the **State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM)**, for implementation of NRLM in each state.

Different Factors contributing into Rural Marketing

- Consumers** : Rural consumers are fundamentally different from their urban counterparts socially, psychologically, physiologically, and literally. Their behaviour is influenced by several aspects namely socio-economic, cultural, psychological, and physiological environment.
- Traditional Market** : It is a meeting place for sellers and buyers and is characterised by a bargaining process. It usually consists of stalls or outlets, booths, and open bases opened by the seller or a market manager.

Aim and Objectives of the Communication Strategy

- Regional autonomy affects the economic development of rural communities, but if it is managed and delivered with communication strategies, it will reach the recipient and this message will be received by rural communities, who have different perceptions and ways of processing messages.
- Thus, the communication strategy should be aimed at better management of traditional markets with an aim to:
 - Providing legal certainty for traditional market operators,
 - Realising order, security, cleanliness, and comfort of traditional markets,
 - Regulating and organising the existence and establishment of traditional markets,
 - Providing business guidance and protection to traditional markets, and
 - Implementation of prosperity among traditional market business actors.

Challenges

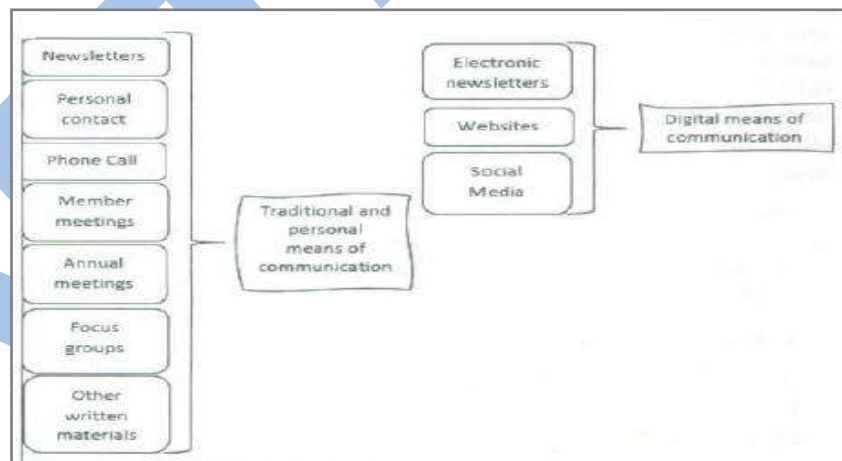
- Organisation and sanitation of rural market areas.
- Technology illiteracy and Lack of Awareness.
- Lack of Internet Connectivity.
- Multiplicity of languages (15 major and over 1300 dialects), diversity in tradition & cultures.
- Lack of distribution channel
- Poor understanding of rural customers.
- Infrastructure, shortage of electricity, water, and sanitation.

Strategy to Improve Communication

- Two essential aspects have been traditionally neglected in rural markets-
 - Sanitation and organisation,
 - B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to customer) communication.
 - B2B and B2C communication strategies must emphasise the usage of symbols and pictures, use of colour in rural communication, use of rhythm and music, use of language, use of models and celebrities.
- To manage traditional markets for rural economic development, the communication strategy to be used in solving the problems that occur is using formal channels through circular letters (regulations) while informal channels in conveying persuasive messages are carried out through face-to-face situations by holding meetings to resolve and make decisions.
- Digital sources of communication can also be used to reduce the geographical distance and they are a less costly alternative, as it optimises the time for exchanging information.

Different Types of Marketing Communication

- Social marketing** : SHG products and SARAS mela efforts in post-COVID-19 era concentrate on social media and online business.
- Social media marketing**: Social media marketing is significantly affecting the application of social media as advertising and communication tools among SMEs in developing economies.
- Word of mouth**: It plays an important role in rural marketing.
- Local content**: Local content is generally defined as content that is intended for a specific local audience, as defined by geographic location, language, culture; and content that is socially, culturally, economically and politically relevant to a given society.
- E-commerce** : In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, e-commerce has become the mantra for the survival of small businesses.



Way Forward

- The social marketing approach requires the segmentation of target adopters based on similar needs. The marketing function is likely to offer the new technological innovation at the right place and the right price, which includes not just the monetary costs but also the social and psychological costs.
- To facilitate the growth of the rural market, the government has to develop infrastructure facilities like roadways, railways, etc., in rural areas.

- Rural communication facilities like telecommunication systems, internet facilities, broadcasting systems as envisaged under Digital India have to be improved so that there will not be any communication gap among players of the rural market segments.
 - Educating rural consumers is the key to successful rural marketing.
- Rural consumers need to be educated in all aspects like usage of the products, gathering product information, consumer rights, laws and regulations, getting the right product at the right place at the right cost at the right time, GST, pricing, packaging, and customer communication.

Panchayati Raj: Present Status and Future Prospects

Introduction

- India has a remarkable achievement of continuing Panchayati Raj System, which is an integral part of our culture and civilisation.
- The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India provided constitutional status and institutional framework to Panchayats to strengthen grassroots level democracy through elected self-governing local bodies in the rural areas.
- Year 2021 marks 28 years since Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) came into existence.

Evolution of Panchayats in India

Before Independence

- In ancient India, Panchayats were usually elected councils with executive and judicial powers.
- During Mughal era, Panchayats were made as 'controlled' local bodies, which could help them in their trading interests by collecting taxes for them.
- During British rule, various commissions like **Royal Commission**, **Simon Commission** etc. recommended the dissemination of powers to local bodies.
 - Nevertheless, under colonial rule local self-governments were never independent and were under the control of state authorities.
- Mahatma Gandhi**, was among the first leaders to advocate for Panchayati Raj, It was the centrepiece of his vision of economic development in India.

After Independence

| Time | Source/ Initiative | Details |
|------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NA | Indian Constitution | When the Indian Constitution was framed, the ' Village Panchayats ' were placed in the Directive Principles of the State Policy (Article 40) the Constitution and states were to endow the Panchayats with powers and authority to enable them to function as units of self-government |
| 1952 | Community Development Programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first organised tackle the problem of rural governance was made through this programme with an objective of bringing socio economic development to the rural masses on democratic lines. But the programme failed to take off along the expected lines due to the absence of an effective instrument for people's participation. |
| 1957 | Balwant Rai Mehta Committee | It recommended three-tier system of governance for Panchayats. |
| Time | Source/ Initiative | Details |
| 1977 | Ashok Mehta Committee | It suggested the need for two-tier system at the ground level of governance |
| 1985 | G.V.K Rao Committee | It advised that elections in local governments are required to be conducted regularly |

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1986 | L M Singhvi Committee | It emphasised the need for constitutional recognition of local self-government |
| 1992 | 73 rd Constitution Amendment Act | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution enacted in 1992, added Part IX to the Constitution. It also added-the Eleventh Schedule which consists of the 29 functional items of the Panchayats. 73rd CAA of 1992 came into force on 24th April 1993. With this act, Panchayati Raj System came under the purview of the justiciable part of the constitution and mandates states to adopt the system. Further it states that the election process in PRIs will be held independent of the State Government's will. The Constitution also contains provisions for reservation of seats for women and weaker sections, regular flow of funds through State Finance Commission and periodical council of elections by the State Election Commission. |
| NA | Representation of Women in Panchayats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 243D of the Constitution mandates that not less than one-third seats at all levels of Panchayats shall be reserved for women. Though the Constitution guarantees only one-third of seats to women, 20 states in the country have made provisions in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts for 50percent reservations for women. |

Functional Responsibilities of Panchayats

- The Constitution mandates nodal role of Gram Panchayat to provide basic civil services at local level. The functions of Panchayats can be classified into three categories
- Mandatory Function:** The mandatory functions are those core or basic functions which a Gram Panchayats need to discharge as per the provisions of the act.
 - General Function:** The PRIs also carry out general functions of planning, execution, and supervision of all developmental programmes.
 - Sectoral Function:** The PRIs as democratically elected local governments have an important role in addressing the diverse socio-economic needs of the rural community.
 - Functions handled by various line departments in consultation approval of Gram Panchayats are known as Sectoral Functions or Agency Functions.

Funding Pattern

- Article 243-I of the Constitution** provides for creation of **State Finance Commissions (SFCs)** to help structure inter-governmental fiscal relations at the state level.
 - The SFCs have the mandate to review the financial position of the Panchayats, ascertain the fiscal gaps and make suitable recommendations to the Governor for redressing the same through tax devolution and grant-in- aid from the State.
 - SFCs ensure regular flow of funds to Panchayats by defining revenue-sharing arrangements between the states and the PRIs.

Activities

- Decentralised and Participatory Planning:** The Constitution has empowered the Panchayats to plan and implement schemes for economic development and social justice.
- Kerala was the first state to undertake the decentralisation effort.
- In 1996, the **"People's Plan Campaign"** was specifically conceived as a vehicle for deepening democracy and decentralised planning.
 - The state subsequently promised to devolve 35-40percent of plan funds to Panchayats to implement the schemes formulated at local level.

- As a result of People's Plan Campaign, Panchayats were afforded the opportunity to design and implement their own plans across the various developmental sectors through direct public participation.
- People's Plan Campaign (PPC)** :Every year during 2nd October to 31st December, MoPR organises **People's Plan Campaign** to formulate GPDP, as 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas', throughout the country.
- This campaign is jointly facilitated by the MoPR, the related Central Ministries, State PR departments, facilitators and the frontline workers of line ministries related to 29 subjects.
- During the campaign, structured **Gram Sabha** meetings are held for preparing GPDP.
- The PPC was launched in 2018 and continued as annual event.
- Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)**: Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) issued general guidelines in 2015 for preparation Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).
- In 2018, MoPR constituted a committee, represented by MoPR, line Ministries, State Governments, NIRDPR and SIRDPRs to revise the guidelines.
- In 2020, MoPR has also brought a framework for preparation of Block and District Panchayat Development Plans.
- Localising SDGs**: Localisation refers to the process of adapting, implementing, and monitoring the SDGs up-to village level for last mile adaptation.
- Formulation of GPDP, presents an opportunity to the Gram Panchayats to synchronise the local plans with SDGs.
- Disaggregating the SDGs into Gram Panchayat level targets have vertical and horizontal linkages, convergence possibilities, resource mobilisation and feasible action by the Panchayats.

Recent Initiatives

- e-Gram Swaraj portal** : With the emphasis on the e- Governance operations, Ministry of Panchayati Raj has put in place **e-Gram Swaraj** a unified portal for effective monitoring and evaluation of works taken up in the Panchayats.
 - The application improves reporting and tracking of Panchayat activities, providing a single interface for capturing panchayat information.
 - The **eGSPI** is mandated for utilisation of central Finance Commission funds by Panchayats.
- Gram Manchitra**: It is a unified Geospatial platform, launched in 2019.
 - It helps in visualising various developmental works to be taken up across the 29 sectors and provide a decision support system to Panchayats during planning process.
 - This application is also linked with **Socio-Economic Cast Census (SECC) report, Mission Antyodaya reports** and resource envelope of Panchayat together with spatial and non-spatial data from various ministries and departments.
- Online Audit of Panchayat Accounts**: MoPR has launched the "**Audit-Online**" application on 15th April, 2020.
 - Audit-Online not only facilitates the online auditing of accounts but also provisions for maintaining audit records that have been carried out.
 - These steps coupled with Social Audit will further strengthen the financial management system of the Panchayats.
- Citizen Charters for Panchayats** : The MoPR has launched a nation-wide campaign namely, '**Meri Panchayat, Mera Adhikaar-Jan Sevaayeni Hamaare Dwaar**' from 1st July 15th August 2021 and Gram Panchayats across the country prepared and published Panchayat Citizen Charter.
- Celebration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (India@75) by Panchayats** : Panchayats across the country are celebrating the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" (India@75) as Jan-Utsav in the spirit of Jan-Bhagidari through outreach initiatives like Jan-Samvaad and Jan-Jagran.
 - For this purpose, the Union Government has identified 225 Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country as **Beacon Panchayats** on the basis of their performances in several fields.

Way Forward

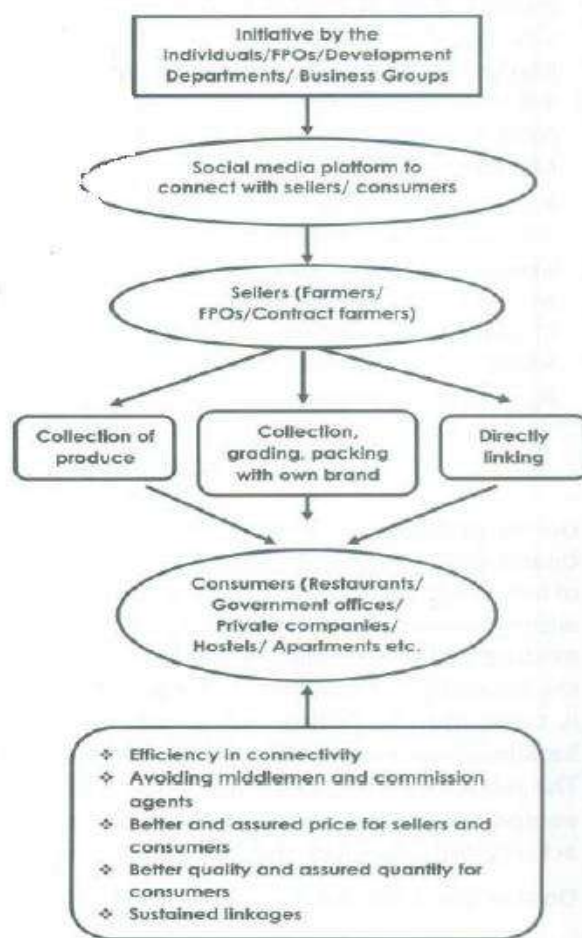
- In order to make the decentralised local self-government more meaningful, states need to be persuaded to devolve functions, funds and functionaries to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system in respective states.
 - The parallel structures or units created by Central and State Governments for implementing specific projects on education, health, etc. need to work under PRIs and convergence need to be ensured, to avoid duplication of activities in villages.
 - **Own Source Revenue (OSR)** of Gram Panchayats provide long-term sustainability to public services.
- It is evident that no other institutions can replace the role played by Panchayats in providing the basic services in rural areas.
 - During disasters and pandemic, Panchayats are gearing-up to manage the situation through public participation.
 - In spite of several challenges, Panchayats, as Third Government, are attempting to keep alive the spirit of democratic decentralisation.

Agricultural Marketing Strategies during COVID-19

Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic led to a standstill around the world and the agricultural chain in India was equally affected.
- However, the crisis also led to several innovations and models in agricultural marketing which were institutionalised by development departments, Farmers Producers Organisations (FPOs), voluntary associations and private players.

Basic Framework Model



Some Examples of State Wise Approach

| Sl | State | Plan |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | HOPCOMS Model, Karnataka | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Horticulture Producers Marketing and Processing Co-operative Society Ltd. (HOPCOMS), the marketing wing of Department of Horticulture, Government of Karnataka (GoK), is involved in procurement and marketing of horticultural produces produced by the member-farmers of this society. It procures produce from the farmers and sells through sale outlets established at different parts of the states. During the pandemic, HOPCOMS by issued special passes to the Farmers for marketing. The farmers who got these special passes, supplied fruits and vegetables to HOPCOMS, which in turn supplied these products to more than 90 government/private institutions such as factories, hospitals and hostels. HOPCOMS got a profit of Rs.1.5 crores by supplying horticultural produces to these institutions. |
| | Karnataka State Mango Development and Marketing Corporation Ltd. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mangoes were collected from the farmers in pre-packed boxes and were distributed by the Board through General Post Office (GPO) of Bengaluru through a marketing tie-up. The farmers were paid after the delivery and the GPO was paid towards transportation charges. It was a B2C initiative, i.e. the Customers has to order by registering themselves and making online payment. |
| | Palamner FPO Andhra Pradesh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palamner FPO is serving its producer members of Palamner taluk of Andhra Pradesh through different kinds of extension services such as supply of inputs (seeds, planting material, fertilizers, plant protection chemicals, farm tools and implements) and procurement and marketing of produces etc. |
| | TENESIRI Vegetables, Karnataka | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TENESIRI Vegetables is a to link the sellers, buyers and consumers of vegetables through its specially developed mobile app. It helps in collecting the orders from both the buyers and consumers and informing the demand to the sellers. |

Conclusion

- The country has enough buffer stocks, which is key in the food security along with nutritional security coming from around 326MT of horticultural production on all fronts.
- So, the new post covid marketing approach is gradual diversification from a heavily subsidy oriented production approach to a gradual volatile market with minimum volatility to reap the benefits of volatility as an approach to make Agri/Horti as an enterprise and market driven production and market system.
- Thus, the new Post-COVID scenario provides ample scope for the new dynamics to be in force, obviously when laissez faire type of volatility is forecasted.

Leveraging ICT in Rural Marketing

Introduction

- The combination of the internet and mobile phones-the most widely used internet enabled device-also known as information and communication technology (ICT), is powerful and can be leveraged to better understand and further our knowledge of India's hinterland.**
- Technology has played a central role in rural India since the early days of post-independence India.
- In rural India, it has become a vessel for tremendous positive change, helping dispense crucial education to rural communities, bringing them within the folds of organised banking, healthcare and employment, and connecting them with new ideas from across the world.

- More importantly, technology has enabled us to better understand the people of India's villages-their structures, lifestyles, cultures, aspirations, and economic activity.

Background

- Since the internet boom of the 1990s, technology has become the central character in India's growth story.
 - In the last three decades, India has successfully fostered a culture of technology development such that today we are a major manufacturer of electronic systems and devices and can boast of a technology capital like Bengaluru.
 - Estimates suggest that by 2025, there will be more internet users in rural India than in the country's urban centres.
- Given that majority of India's rural population is involved in agricultural activities, one of the two major components of rural marketing in the country is enabling the sale of agricultural products in urban areas.
- In order to maximise sales, farmers must cater to the changing landscape of urban food consumption that is increasingly veering towards organic food types and international flavours.

Potential of Marketing in Rural India through ICT

- Education:** Rural Indians are realising the importance of education in upward social and economic mobility.
 - Farming families are eager to educate their children to open alternative career options for them. Therefore, education-especially online education-has tremendous potential in rural India.
- Healthcare:** In rural India, too, there is tremendous potential to market for expanding formal health services, establishing allopathic medicine hospitals and educating the populace on good health practices and disease prevention.
- e-commerce:** To bring India's rural hinterland apace with global growth, the expansion of e-commerce platforms in these areas is undeniably important.
 - It effectively fulfils the gap between the wants of the rural communities-especially those they cannot meet locally.
 - E-commerce also can bring goods produced in rural economies-handloom products, region specific textiles to consumers across the country, and indeed across the globe.
- Technology:** Technology itself holds immense opportunities for expansion in rural India.
 - In addition, to dispensing information, providing services and connecting rural manufacturers and markets to the national supply chain, ICT can provide employment to millions of rural youths who are seeking to diversify their family income.
 - BPOs are one such form of employment generation. They can be a potential source of mass employment.

Conclusion

- The sheer size of rural India holds a large economic opportunity for businesses. But as higher incomes and growing internet penetration converge, this economic opportunity is made larger still.
 - Rural marketing must, therefore, invest in seeking to understand the rural market, consumer tastes and aspirations.
- Information and communication technology has enabled us to understand rural India like never before.
 - Its use must continue to be expanded widely and rural marketing deployed responsibly to nurture the constantly changing landscape of rural India.

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