

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for constitution of Development and Welfare Board for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Communities (DNCs).

Amongst the most disadvantage communities in the country are the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DNCs). These communities are hard to reach, less visible, and therefore frequently left out. While most DNTs are spread across the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.

Need for protection: Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities are considered to be the most deprived sections of Indian society. The nomadic and semi-nomadic communities move from place to place in search of livelihood. As a result, they are frequently left out. Hence to address the issues related to these communities there is a need for special attention.

Challenges faced by them:

- The Denotified Tribes are communities that were listed or notified as 'born criminal' by the British under a number of laws. The term, 'Denotified and Nomadic Tribes', can be traced to the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871.
- The colonial government notified nearly 200 tribal communities to be hereditary criminals, cementing their societal identity as outcasts and subjecting them to constant harassment by the administration.
- Forest laws that came into force from the mid-nineteenth century onwards deprived a large number of communities of their traditional rights of hunting and gathering. The new laws criminalised their very source of livelihood when it practiced.
- When the forests were cleared by the British for commercial use and forest communities asked to contribute to labour, some communities resisted and were declared 'criminal'.
- The British thought that communities had lost their legitimate means of livelihood, they must have been living by indulging in criminal activities due to arrival of road and railway networks. After India gained Independence, these tribes were 'de-notified' from the list of Criminal Tribes.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Guru Ravidas Birth Anniversary**

Sant Ravidas Jayanti was celebrated on February 19th. This year is said to be the 642nd birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas.

Guru Ravidas:

- Guru Ravidas was a North Indian mystic poet of the bhakti movement.
- While the exact year of his birth is not known, it is believed that the saint was born in 1377 C.E.
- Guru Ravidas Jayanti is celebrated on Magh Purnima, which is the full moon day in the Hindu calendar month of Magha.
- The Adi Granth of Sikhs, in addition to the Panchvani are the two of the oldest documented sources of the literary works of Guru Ravidas.
- Notably, he belonged to an untouchable caste and suffered a lot of atrocities as a result. However, the saint chose to focus on spiritual pursuits and also penned several devotional songs which made a huge impact in the Bhakti movement during the 14th to 16th century CE.

Guru Ravidas Teachings:

- Guru Ravidas spoke against the caste divisions and spoke of removing them to promote unity. His teachings resonated with the people, leading to a religion being born called the Ravidassia religion, or Ravidassia Dharam based on his teachings.
- He taught about the omnipresence of God and said that a human soul is a particle of God and hence Ravidas rejected the idea that people considered lower caste cannot meet God. He said in his teachings that the only way to meet God was to free the mind from the duality.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Gramin (PMAY-G)**

Cabinet approves continuation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin beyond March, 2019 (PMAY-G Phase-II).

PMAY- G:

- The erstwhile rural housing scheme Indira Awas yojana (IAY) has been restructured into Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana –Gramin (PMAY-G) from 01.04.2016.

- PMAY-G aims at providing a pucca house, with basic amenities, to all houseless householder and those households living in kutcha and dilapidated house, by 2022.
- Cost sharing: The cost of unit assistance in this scheme is shared between Central and State Governments in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90: 10 for North Eastern and Himalayan States.
- The scheme envisages training of Rural Masons with the objective of improving workmanship and quality of construction of houses while at the same time, increasing availability of skilled masons and enhancing employability of such masons.
- Selection of beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) is based on housing deprivation parameters of Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011, subject to 13 point exclusion criteria, followed by Gram Sabha verification.

Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved launch of Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan with the objective of providing financial and water security to farmers.

The proposed scheme consists of three components:

- Component-A: 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.
- Component-B: Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.
- Component-C: Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.

All three components combined, the scheme aims to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022. The total central financial support provided under the scheme would be Rs. 34,422 crore.

Key facts:

- Under Component A, Renewable power plants of capacity 500 KW to 2 MW will be setup by individual farmers/ cooperatives/panchayats /farmer producer organisations (FPO) on their barren or cultivable lands. The power generated will be purchased by the DISCOMs at Feed in tariffs determined by respective SERC. The scheme will open a stable and continuous source of income to the rural land owners.
- Under Component C of the scheme, individual farmers will be supported to solarise pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP. The farmer will be able to use the generated energy to meet the irrigation needs and the excess available energy will be sold to DISCOM. This will help to create an avenue for extra income to the farmers, and for the States to meet their RPO targets.
- For both Component-B and Component-C, central financial assistance (CFA) of 30% of the benchmark cost or the tender cost, whichever is lower, will be provided. The State Government will give a subsidy of 30%; and the remaining 40% will be provided by the farmer. Bank finance may be made available for meeting 30% of the cost. The remaining 10% will be provided by the farmer. Higher CFA of 50% will be provided for North Eastern States, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Lakshadweep and A&N Islands.

Significance of the scheme:

- The Scheme will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emissions. All three components of the Scheme combined together are likely to result in saving of about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum. Further, Component-B of the Scheme on standalone solar pumps may result in saving of 1.2 billion liters of diesel per annum and associated savings in the foreign exchange due to reduction of import of crude oil.
- The scheme has direct employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the proposal is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 6.31 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

India to participate in PISA 2021

Cabinet has given ex-post facto approval to the Agreement between India and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for participating in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), which will be conducted by the OECD in 2021. The Agreement was signed on 28th January 2019.

Significance: India's participation in PISA- 2021 would lead to recognition and acceptability of Indian students and prepare them for the global economy in the 21st century.

Background:

- India had taken part in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 and bagged the 72nd rank among 74 participating countries. Then UPA government had boycotted PISA, blaming "out of context" questions for India's dismal performance.

- Later, the HRD Ministry, under the NDA-II government, revisited this decision in 2016 and the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) had set up a committee to review the matter and submitted its report in December 2016. The report recommended for participation in test in 2018. However, India missed the application deadline for the 2018 cycle.

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA):

- It is an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy every three years.
- First conducted in 2000, the major domain of study rotates between reading, mathematics, and science in each cycle. PISA also includes measures of general or cross-curricular competencies, such as collaborative problem solving.
- By design, PISA emphasizes functional skills that students have acquired as they near the end of compulsory schooling.
- PISA is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization of industrialized countries, and is conducted in the United States by NCES. Data collection for the most recent assessment was completed in Fall 2015.
- In 2012 PISA test, schools of Shanghai in China topped reading, mathematics and science test, followed closely by Singapore. In 2015, Singapore, Japan and Estonia were ranked as top three countries, in that order.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019

The Union Cabinet has approved promulgating an ordinance with regard to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, to protect gullible investors from Ponzi schemes.

Significance and impact:

- The proposed Ordinance will immediately tackle the menace of illicit deposit-taking activities in the country launched by rapacious operators, which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings.
- It will altogether ban unregulated deposit taking schemes, and the law has adequate provisions for punishment and disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.

Key provisions of the Bill:

- Substantive banning clause which bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any Unregulated Deposit Scheme.
- Creation of three different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.
- Severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines to act as deterrent.
- Provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.
- Attachment of properties / assets by the Competent Authority, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors.
- Clear-cut time lines have been provided for attachment of property and restitution to depositors.
- Creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit-taking activities in the country.
- The Bill defines "Deposit Taker" and "Deposit" comprehensively:
 - "Deposit Takers" include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation.
 - "Deposit" is defined in such a manner that deposit-takers are restricted from camouflaging public deposits as receipts, and at the same time, not to curb or hinder acceptance of money by an establishment in the ordinary course of its business.

Need for the law:

- To deal with the menace of illicit deposit taking schemes, as in the recent past, there have been rising instances of people in various parts of the country being defrauded by illicit deposit taking schemes.
- The worst victims of these schemes are the poor and the financially illiterate, and the operations of such schemes are often spread over many States.

National Policy on Electronics 2019

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019), proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The Policy envisions positioning India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing – (ESDM) by encouraging and driving capabilities in the country for developing core components, including chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.

Salient Features of NPE 2019:

- Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector: Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM.
- Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components.
- Provide special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.
- Formulate suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units.
- Promote Industry-led R&D and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations and early stage Start-ups in emerging technology areas such as 5G, IoT/ Sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Drones, Robotics, Additive Manufacturing, Photonics, Nano-based devices, etc.
- Provide incentives and support for significantly enhancing availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling.
- Special thrust on Fabless Chip Design Industry, Medical Electronic Devices Industry, Automotive Electronics Industry and Power Electronics for Mobility and Strategic Electronics Industry.
- Create Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF) to promote the development and acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector.
- Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cyber security profile.

Major Impact:

The NPE 2019 when implemented will lead to formulation of several schemes, initiatives, projects, etc., in consultation with the concerned Ministries/ Departments, for the development of ESDM sector in the country. It will enable flow of investment and technology, leading to higher value addition in the domestically manufactured electronic products, increased electronics hardware manufacturing in the country and their export, while generating substantial employment opportunities.

National Rural Economic Transformation Project

The Union Cabinet has approved the Implementation of an Externally Aided Project namely National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) through loan assistance (IBRD Credit) from World Bank.

Benefits: The technical assistance provided by NRETP and the higher level interventions facilitated by the project will enhance the livelihoods promotion and access to finance and scale-up initiatives on digital finance and livelihood interventions.

Salient features: DAY-NRLM lays special emphasis on targeting the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable communities and their financial inclusion. Innovative projects will be undertaken under NRETP to pilot alternate channels of financial inclusion, creating value chains around rural products, introduce innovative models in livelihoods promotion and access to finance and scale-up initiatives on digital finance and livelihood interventions.

Significance of DAY- NRLM:

DAY-NRLM provides for mutually beneficial working relationship and formal platforms for consultations between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). NRLM has also developed activity map to facilitate convergence in different areas of interventions where NRLM institutions and PRIs could work together which has been disseminated to all state Rural Livelihood Missions.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The pain of regret is more painful than the pain of studies.