

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Manual Scavenging**

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed Rajya Sabha about the status of Manual scavenging related deaths.

About:

- 282 people have died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the country between 2016 and November 2019.
- Among the States, Tamil Nadu has recorded 40 deaths, the highest in number, in these four years. This is followed by Haryana with 31 deaths, and Gujarat and Delhi with 30 deaths each.
- The deaths have been higher in states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh where there has been rapid and unplanned urbanisation.

Related Info:

There are about 60,440 manual scavengers identified across the country, in 17 States. The Parliament had enacted the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Nagpur Resolution: A Holistic Approach For Empowering Citizens**

The 'Nagpur Resolution- A holistic approach for empowering citizens' was adopted during the Regional Conference on 'Improving Public Service Delivery – Role of Governments', in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

About:

- The conference was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra.
- The Conference resolved that Government of India and the State Governments shall collaborate to:
 - empower the citizens through timely updation of citizens charters, implementation of enactments and benchmarking standards for continuous improvement;
 - empower citizens by reduction in timelines of grievance redressal;
 - adopt a holistic approach for improved service delivery through digital platforms;
 - achieve a sense of common identity by exchange of expertise in the areas of Improved Service Delivery between the paired States under the Ek Bharat – Shresht Bharat Program;
 - Ensure timely publication of Good Governance Index to identify the quality of governance in 10 sectors especially those pertaining to welfare and infrastructure at the Union, State and District levels.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Year End Review -2019 Of Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship**

Several initiatives were taken by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship which has led to enhanced skilling opportunities and trained workforce in the country.

About:

- National Skill Development Mission (NSDM): Because of the efforts under NSDM, more than One Crore youth are being imparted skills training annually under various programs of the Central Government.
- Skill India Portal: A strong IT Platform, namely Skill India portal has been launched to converge the skilling data of various Central Ministries, State Governments, Private Training Providers and Corporates on a single platform.
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): Under the program about 87 Lakhs youth have been trained till date.

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK): Out of the 812 allocated PMKKs, 681 centres had been established.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): RPL program, under PMKVY 2016-19, was launched to recognize the prior skills acquired by Individuals. Till date, more than 26 lakh people have been oriented under the RPL program of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).
- STRIVE: The main focus of the scheme is to improve the performance of ITIs. Under phase one, 314 ITIs have been selected & 198 Performance Based Grant Agreements have been signed.
- PM-YUVA Yojana (Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan) is implementing a pilot project in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)/National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), Polytechnics, PMKKs/ PMKVY and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)), across 12 States and Union Territories.
- Kaushalyacharya Awards: To recognize and appreciate the good works done by trainers, Kaushalacharya Awards 2019 were given to felicitate 53 trainers from different sectors for their exceptional contribution towards creating a future-ready and skilled workforce.
- National Entrepreneurship Awards 2019: MSDE conferred NEA 2019 to 30 Young Entrepreneurs and 6 Organizations / Individuals, building Entrepreneurship eco-system in the country. The award included a trophy, a certificate and prize money up to Rs 10 lakhs.
- Formation of District Skill Committees: The ministry has formed District Skill Committees (DSC) in all Districts as part of its Aspirational Skilling Abhiyaan under the Sankalp program, which is funded by World Bank.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Peregrine Falcon

According to the study, published in the Journal of Experimental Biology, the peregrine falcon has the fastest vision in the animal kingdom, registering 129 Hz (blinks per second). In comparison, humans see up to a maximum of 50 to 60 blinks per second.

About:

- Scientific name: Falco peregrinus.
- Common name: Peregrine Falcon, peregrine.
- Family: It is a widespread bird of prey (raptor) in the family Falconidae.
- Speed: The Peregrine is renowned for its speed, reaching over 320 km/h (200 mph) during its characteristic hunting stoop (high-speed dive), making it the fastest bird in the world and the fastest member of the animal kingdom.
- Range: It can be found nearly everywhere on Earth, except extreme polar regions, very high mountains, and most tropical rainforests. This makes it one of the most widely found bird species.
- IUCN Red List status: Least Concern.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

Core Catcher

The Moscow-based Rosatom State Corporation Engineering Division announced that it had installed a core melt localisation device (CMLD) or “core catcher” at Unit 3 of Tamil Nadu’s Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP).

Corium:

- Molten core material, or corium, is lava-like material that gets formed in the core of a nuclear reactor in the event of a meltdown accident. The corium so formed can remain radioactive for several decades, even centuries.
- Such an accident occurs when the nuclear fission reaction taking place inside a reactor is not sufficiently cooled, and the buildup of heat causes fuel rods to melt down.
- In the past, meltdown accidents have occurred at Chernobyl in Russia in 1986 and at Fukushima in Japan in 2011.

Core Catcher:

- Core melt localisation device (CMLD) or a core catcher device is designed to localise and cool the molten core material in case of a meltdown accident.
- According to the Rosatom website, the core catcher is a cone shaped metal structure that weighs about 800 tonnes. The structure is double walled, with the gap between the two walls filled with FAOG (ferric and aluminium oxide granules).
- The core catcher is filled with a ceramic mixture also including ferric oxide and aluminium oxide, called 'sacrificial material'. The sacrificial material prevents the corium from trickling through and also acts as a cooling mechanism.
- The core catcher device is installed at the bottom of the nuclear station's protective shell, and is designed to save the latter as well as exude radioactive emission in the environment in case of a serious accident, according to the press release.

Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)

A new study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) showed that salt and fat in an array of "junk food" was well above proposed regulatory thresholds.

About:

- To calculate this, the organisation relied on the concept of the recommended dietary allowance (RDA), a daily ceiling on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrate and trans-fat.
- The RDA is based on scientific consensus and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad (in India).
- It says that, ideally, an adult should consume no more than 5g of salt, 60g of fat, 300g carbohydrate and 2.2 g of transfat every day.
- Further, the RDA from breakfast, lunch and dinner should not be more than 25% and that from snacks (assumed to be those munched between meals), must be no more than 10%. Thus, a snack should ideally have no more than 0.5g of salt and 6g of fat.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Enactment of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act has brought the Indian economy on the path of fiscal prudence only in letter but not in spirit. Critically analyse.
Ans

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act was enacted in 2003. The objective of the Act is to ensure inter-generational equity in fiscal management, long-run macroeconomic stability, better coordination between fiscal and monetary policy, and transparency in the fiscal operations of the Government.

It provides a legal and institutional framework for fiscal consolidation. It is now mandatory for the Central government to take measures to reduce the fiscal deficit, to eliminate revenue deficit and to generate revenue surplus in the subsequent years. The Act binds not only the present government but also the future Government to adhere to the path of fiscal consolidation.

Implementation of the FRBM Act has significantly improved India's quantitative fiscal situation such as:

- The implementation of the FRBM Act has improved the fiscal performance of both the centre and states. The States have achieved the targets much ahead of the prescribed timeline.
- The Act has helped in the issues relating to fiscal consolidation due to the mandatory medium-term and strategy statements which are required to be presented annually before Parliament.
- The Act has helped in strict adherence to the path of fiscal consolidation during the pre-subprime crisis period created enough fiscal space for pursuing the countercyclical fiscal policy. Implementing the Act, the government had managed to cut the fiscal deficit to 2.7% of GDP and revenue deficit to 1.1% of GDP in 2007-08.

- However, due to the global financial crisis of 2008, the deadline for the implementation of the targets in the Act was suspended. The fiscal deficit rose to 6.2% of GDP in 2008–09 against the target of 3% set by the Act for 2008–09.

However, the qualitative aspects of fiscally consolidating the economy have remained largely elusive:

- While there is a drastic fall in deficits, it has largely been on account of reductions in expenditure in critical sectors of the economy such as education, health etc. The Union government's development expenditure as a proportion of GDP has declined over time.
- An analysis of revenue account of the development expenditure by states shows that in almost all sectors of development, there has been a decline in the FRBM era.
- Also, at times it has been seen that the government has achieved the deficit targets by manipulating the revenue and expenditure accounts such as curtailing the capital expenditure; demanding interim dividend from Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in advance etc.
- Further, the FRBM Act ignores the possible inverse link between fiscal deficit (fiscal expansion) and bank credit (monetary expansion). That is, if credit growth falls, fiscal deficit may need to rise and if credit rises, fiscal deficit ought to fall — to ensure adequate money supply to the economy.
- Data on money supply growth, bank credit and GDP establishes that both money supply growth and credit expansion have significantly reduced in relation to GDP growth. Thus, the FRBM Act has not only reduced the fiscal deficit but also starved the growing economy from much-needed investment.

Conclusion

To ensure effective and efficient operation of the FRBM Act, few steps can be followed such as:

- The Government should consider a medium-term framework for fiscal policy and ensure that over the medium-term targets are met.
- On the basis of international developments, there is a need to build capacity in managing the fiscal policy of the government, and effective and efficient debt management of the government.
- Interest payments pre-empt a substantial part of revenue receipts. Given the limitations of enhancing tax collection, the Government increasingly resorts to borrowing. Therefore, there is a need to rationalize the interest expenditure of the Central Government.
- There is a need to be more specific on 'exceptional circumstances' when the 'pause' button can be used to stall the targets provided by the FRBM Act.
- Recommendations of the N.K. Singh Committee should be implemented in a time-bound manner so that the developmental needs of the economy are not unduly compromised while being on the path of fiscal prudence.