

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC

Usage Of Modern Contraceptives

Details of measures taken by the Government to increase the availability, awareness and usage of modern contraceptives are given below:

About:

- Mission Parivar Vikas: The Government has launched Mission Parivar Vikas on 10th November 2016 for substantially increasing access to contraceptives and family planning services in 146 high fertility districts with Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 3 and above in seven high focus states.
- New contraceptives viz. Injectable contraceptive (Antara program) and Centchroman (Chhaya) have been added to the existing basket of choices in 2015-16.
- A new method of IUCD insertion immediately after delivery i.e. post-partum IUCD (PPIUCD) has been introduced in 2010.
- Family Planning Logistic Management and Information System (FP-LMIS): A dedicated software launched in 2017, to ensure smooth forecasting, procurement and distribution of family planning commodities across all the levels of health facilities.
- Clinical Outreach Teams (COT) Scheme has been launched in 146 Mission Parivar Vikas districts wef December 2017 for providing family planning services through mobile teams from accredited organizations in far-flung, underserved and geographically difficult areas.

National Action Plan For Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)

Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment informed Lok Sabha about the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR).

About:

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated a National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018-2025.
- The Plan aims at reduction of adverse consequences of substance (drug) abuse through a multi-pronged strategy.
- The activities under the NAPDDR, inter-alia, include awareness generation programmes in schools/colleges/Universities, community based peerled intervention programmes for vulnerable adolescent and youth in the community, provisioning of treatment facilities and capacity building of service providers.
- The Ministry is also providing central assistance for running and maintenance for Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts (IRCA's).

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) For Females

Union Minister for Human Resource Development informed Lok Sabha about Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females.

About:

- As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19, there are 39931 colleges in India, out of which 60.53% are located in rural areas. Further, majority of the colleges provide higher education to both males and females and 11.04% colleges are exclusively for females.
- Additionally, as per AISHE 2018-19, females constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment in higher education and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females in higher education at 26.4% is higher than the national GER of boys at 26.3%.
- Also, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased during the last 5 years, from 0.92 in 2014-15 to 1 in 2018-19.

Nominated Members of Rajya Sabha

President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha.

About:

- Under article 80 of the Constitution, Rajya Sabha is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.
- Mr Gogoi served as the 46th Chief Justice of India from 3rd October 2018 till 17th November 2019.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Mission Solar Charkha**

Union Minister for MSME informed Rajya Sabha about Mission Solar Charkha.

About:

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has launched the Mission Solar Charkha in 2018-19 for implementation of 50 Solar Charkha Clusters across the country.
- The aims and objectives of Mission Solar Charkha are:-
 - To ensure inclusive growth by generation of employment, especially for women and youth and sustainable development through solar charkha cluster in rural areas.
 - To boost rural economy and help in arresting migration from rural to urban areas.
 - To leverage low-cost, innovative technologies and processes for substance.
- Till date, 10 projects have been approved under Mission Solar Charkha. One Solar Charkha cluster has been identified in Andhra Pradesh.
- The scheme envisages to generate direct employment to nearly one lakh persons.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Demand And Import of Oil**

Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas informed Lok Sabha today about the Demand and Import of Oil.

About:

- The percentage of Import Dependency on Oil based on consumption of petroleum products during the 2018-19 was about 83.8%.
- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL), a Government of India Special Purpose Vehicle, has established Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) facilities with total capacity of 5.33 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) at 3 locations, namely (i) Vishakhapatnam, (ii) Mangaluru and (iii) Padur.
- As per the consumption pattern of 2017-18, the total capacity is estimated to provide for about 9.5 days of crude oil requirement. Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) currently have stock for 64.5 days. Hence, total capacity storage of petroleum products is 74 days.
- Government has given 'in principle' approval for establishing two additional SPR facilities with total storage capacity of 6.5 MMT at two locations namely (i) Chandikhol in Odisha (4 MMT) and (ii) Padur in Karnataka (2.5 MMT).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**Premium Subsidy Sharing Pattern (Agriculture)**

Premium subsidy sharing pattern between Centre & North Eastern states changed from 50:50 to 90:10.

About:

- Agriculture minister informed the Lok Sabha that the premium subsidy sharing pattern between Centre and North Eastern States has been changed from 50 : 50 to 90:10.
- It will allow more States to notify the scheme and existing States to notify more crops and areas to facilitate greater coverage of farmers under the scheme.
- For remaining States, subsidy sharing pattern will continue as 50 : 50.
- The Minister also said, Insurance companies will now be selected by the States for 3 years in a go instead of one year thereby increasing their commitment and accountability to the farmers.

Privatisation Of Companies

Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs informed Lok Sabha about privatisation of companies.

About:

- The Government has given 'in-principle' approval for Privatisation of 24 CPSEs including Subsidiaries, Units and Joint Ventures with sale of majority stake and transfer of management control.
- The Government follows a policy of strategic disinvestment of CPSEs, which are not in 'priority sectors'.
- For this purpose, NITI Aayog has been mandated to identify such CPSEs based on the criteria of (i) National Security; (ii) Sovereign function at arm's length, and (iii) Market Imperfections and Public Purpose.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**PCR Test**

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said designated labs will use the conventional real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to test for the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

About:

- Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is conducted on swab collected from the back of the throat, a liquid sample from the lower respiratory tract, or a simple saliva sample. Such tests are commonly used in Influenza A, Influenza B and H1N1 virus detection.
- The PCR test uses a technique that creates copies of a segment of DNA.
- 'Polymerase' refers to the enzymes that make the copies of DNA.
- The 'chain reaction' is how the DNA fragments are copied, exponentially — one is copied into two, the two are copied into four, and so on.
- Kary Mullis, the American biochemist who invented the PCR technique, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1993.

Reverse Transcription:

- However, SARS-COV-2 is a virus made of RNA, which needs to be converted into DNA. For this, the technique includes a process called reverse transcription.
- A 'reverse transcriptase' enzyme converts the RNA into DNA. Copies of the DNA are then made and amplified. A fluorescent DNA binding dye called the "probe" shows the presence of the virus. The test also distinguishes SARS-COV-2 from other viruses.

Starch-Based 'Hemostat' Material

Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology, has developed a starch-based 'hemostat' material that concentrates the natural clotting factors in blood by physically absorbing excess fluid.

About:

- Hemostat materials absorb excess fluid by concentrating the natural clotting factors in the blood that are critical for stopping the blood flow; however, the bleeding can restart when non-biodegradable materials are removed.
- By chemically modifying natural starch to form microparticles, researchers have combined the advantages of biocompatibility and biodegradability with a five- to ten-fold increase in fluid absorption and much-improved adhesion.
- When the microparticles combine, they create an adherent gel that can remain on the wound until slowly dissipating as healing proceeds. The microparticles are prepared by modifying some of the chemical hydroxyl groups on starch to carboxymethyl groups while also incorporating the beneficial calcium ions.
- The biodegradable microparticles that combine to form a gel on a wound offer significant improvements over existing alternatives.

Electric Vehicles

Heavy Industries Minister informed Rajya Sabha that the Government has set an ambitious target to achieve sales of around 70 lakh hybrid and electric vehicles by the end of this year.

About:

- Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India, FAME scheme was initiated in 2015. The scheme was formulated to promote the manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology under the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020.
- In the 2nd phase of the scheme, it is aimed to support through demand incentives about seven thousand E-buses, 5 lakh E-3 wheelers, 55 thousand E-4 wheelers passenger cars and 10 lakh E-2 wheelers.

DEFENCE AND SECURITYPermanent Commission For Women In The Navy

Maintaining that women and men officers should be treated equally, the Supreme Court today cleared permanent commission for women in the Navy and asked the Centre to complete the modalities within three months.

About:

- It said, denying permanent commission to women officers who have served the nation would result in a serious miscarriage of justice.
- The bench rejected the Centre's stand that sea sailing duties cannot be granted to SSC (Short Service Commission) women officers in the Navy as its Russian vessels do not have washrooms for them.
- Such arguments, the court said, are contrary to the Centre's policy of 1991 and 1998 which lifted the statutory bar on the induction of women officers in the Navy.

- The bench quashed the prospective effect of the policy barring women officers inducted before 2008 from being granted permanent commission in the Navy. It also granted pension benefits to women officers who have retired and were not granted permanent commission.

Efforts To Boost Defence Sector

Raksha Mantri informed Rajya Sabha about the efforts made by Government to boost country's defence sector during the last two years.

About:

- Industrial licensing: Defence Products list requiring Industrial Licences has been rationalised and manufacture of most of the parts and components does not require Industrial Licence.
- FDI: Foreign Investment is allowed under automatic route upto 49% and above 49% through government route.
- Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP): A new category of procurement 'Buy {Indian-IDDMM (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)}' has been introduced in DPP-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of defence equipments.
- "Make" Procedure: In February, 2018 a separate procedure for 'Make-II' sub-category has been notified wherein a number of industry friendly provisions have been introduced.
- Government has notified the 'Strategic Partnership (SP)' Model which envisages establishment of long-term strategic partnerships with Indian entities, wherein they would tie up with global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to seek technology transfers to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains.
- iDEX: Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework, was launched with the aim to achieve self-reliance and to foster innovation in Defence Sector by engaging Industries including MSMEs, startups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia.
- Defence Corridors: Government has decided to establish two defence industrial corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh to serve as engines of economic development and growth of defence industrial base in the country.
- The Ministry has instituted a new framework titled 'Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti' which aims to provide boost to the IPR culture in indigenous defence industry.
- Defence Investor Cell has been created in the Ministry to provide all necessary information including addressing queries related to investment opportunities, procedures and regulatory requirements for investment in the sector.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. While virtual currencies offer many opportunities, they also pose some serious threats. Comment.

Virtual currency is a type of unregulated digital currency that is only available in electronic form. It is held within the blockchain network that is not controlled by a centralized banking authority. For example, Bitcoins.

Opportunities offer by Virtual Currencies

- They make transactions quicker as no intermediaries are involved, also due to flexibility and ease of conversion.
- Encourage financial integration while giving a reduction in costs for international and local transactions.
- They have the potential for global scalability. In several countries, Bitcoin and different coins are as of now acknowledged along with fiat cash at terminals and stores.
- They feature enhanced secure transactions by using blockchain technology and cryptography to make a private, secure environment.
- Block chain technology enables exchanges, transfers, and different activities can be performed if the agreement is reached among all hubs in the network.
- They widen the financial market by enabling more investment and speculative avenues.

Threats from Virtual Currencies

- There is a danger of hacking attacks, including the installation of malware on the PCs and smartphones of ordinary clients.
- There have been various cases of closure of crypto exchanges and bankruptcy in the early history of the digital currency market.
- A recent report verified that during the most recent years, the closure of crypto exchanges reached 48 percent.

- Virtual currency is unregulated and therefore experiences dramatic price movements since the only real force behind trading is consumer sentiment.
- If a crypto exchange goes bankrupt and closes, clients do not get an opportunity to recover the assets from their accounts, and there is nothing that can be done. There is no legal authority or law to appeal.
- On the contrary, when a bank goes bankrupt, it, as a rule, has a specific reserve fund. People who suffer as a result of this will recover their assets in a specific order, or possibly some of them.

Conclusion

- These opportunities and challenges have been evident in the recent Bitcoin market. These currencies though cannot replace legal tenders have immense importance with respect to their working platforms like blockchain that are more secure and can enhance a digital economy and need regulation like diktats of RBI.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

- With reference to the Sagarmala programme, consider the following statements:
 - It is the flagship programme of the Ministry of Shipping.
 - Its objective is to promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females as per the Human Resource Development ministry, consider the following statements:
 - Additionally, as per AISHE 2018-19, females constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment in higher education and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females in higher education at 26.4% is higher than the national GER of boys at 26.3%.
 - The Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased during the last 5 years, from 0.92 in 2014-15 to 1 in 2018-19.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the Mission Solar Charkha, consider the following statements:
 - It is an initiative of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
 - It aims to ensure inclusive growth by generation of employment, especially for women and youth and sustainable development through solar charkha cluster in rural areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the Demand and Import of Oil., consider the following statements:
 - The percentage of Import Dependency on Oil based on consumption of petroleum products during the 2018-19 was about 83.8%.
 - Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL), a Government of India Special Purpose Vehicle, has established Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) facilities at 20 locations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) **1 only**
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the privatisation of companies, consider the following statements:
 - The Government follows a policy of strategic disinvestment of CPSEs, which are not in 'priority sectors'.
 - For this purpose, NITI Aayog has been mandated to identify such CPSEs based on the criteria of (i) National Security; (ii) Sovereign function at arm's length, and (iii) Market Imperfections and Public Purpose.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the electric vehicles, consider the following statements:

1. Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India, FAME scheme was initiated in 2019.
2. The scheme was formulated to promote the manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology under the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

7. With reference to the defence sector, consider the following statements:

1. Foreign Investment is allowed in defence under automatic route upto 75%.
2. A new category of procurement 'Buy {Indian-IDD (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)}' has been introduced in DPP-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of defence equipments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

8. With reference to the permanent commission for women in the Navy, consider the following statements:

1. Supreme Court lifted the statutory bar on the induction of women officers in the Navy.
2. Supreme Court granted pension benefits to women officers who have retired and were not granted permanent commission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

9. With reference to the Premium subsidy sharing pattern (Agriculture), consider the following statements:

1. Premium subsidy sharing pattern between Centre & North Eastern states changed from 50:50 to 90:10.
2. It will allow more States to notify the scheme and existing States to notify more crops and areas to facilitate greater coverage of farmers under the scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. With reference to the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, consider the following statements:

1. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is conducted on swab collected from the back of the throat, a liquid sample from the lower respiratory tract, or a simple saliva sample.
2. It uses a technique that creates copies of a segment of DNA.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

11. With reference to the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR), consider the following statements:

1. 'The Union Ministry of Health has formulated a National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018-2025.
2. The Plan aims at reduction of adverse consequences of substance (drug) abuse through a multi-pronged strategy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

12. With reference to the usage of modern contraceptives, consider the following statements:

1. A new method of IUCD insertion immediately after delivery i.e. post-partum IUCD (PPIUCD) has been introduced in 2010.
2. Clinical Outreach Teams (COT) Scheme has been launched in 146 Mission ParivarVikas districts wef December 2017 for providing family planning services through mobile teams from accredited organizations in far-flung, underserved and geographically difficult areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2