

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Infant Mortality**

Two scientific papers on child survival published by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative depicted a significant decline — 49% — in the under-5 mortality rate (U5MR) between 2000 and 2017, but it pointed out inequality between states and wide variations between districts.

About:

- The findings show there were 1.04 million under-5 deaths in 2017, down from 2.24 million deaths in 2000
- Neonatal deaths in India have gone down from 1.02 million deaths in 2000 to 0.57 million deaths in 2017. Neonatal mortality rate (NMR) has dropped by 38% in India since 2000.
- Sixty-eight per cent of under-5 deaths in India are attributed to child and maternal malnutrition, whereas 83% of the neonatal deaths to low birth weight and short gestation.
- The highest number of under-5 deaths in 2017 were in UP (312,800, which included 165,800 neonatal deaths) and Bihar (141,500, including 75,300 neonatal deaths).

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC**Direct Seeding Of Rice (DSR)**

Due to shortage of labourers in Punjab and Haryana, farmers are now being encouraged to adopt 'direct seeding of rice' (DSR) in place of conventional transplanting.

Normal transplanting of paddy:

- In transplanting, farmers prepare nurseries where the paddy seeds are first sown and raised into young plants.
- These seedlings are then uprooted and replanted 25-35 days later in the main field. The nursery seed bed is 5-10% of the area to be transplanted.

Direct seeding of Rice (DSR):

- In DSR, there is no nursery preparation or transplantation. The seeds are instead directly drilled into the field by a tractor-powered machine.
- The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) in Ludhiana has developed a 'Lucky Seed Drill' that can both sow seeds and simultaneously spray herbicides to control weeds.
- In DSR, water is replaced by real chemical herbicides. Farmers have to only level their land and give one pre-sowing irrigation or rauni. It also saves water by not requiring flooding of fields.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**PM CARES Fund**

PM CARES (Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations) Fund Trust decided to allocate Rs. 3100 Crore for fight against COVID-19.

About:

- Out of Rs 3100 crore, a sum of approximately Rs.2000 crore will be earmarked for the purchase of 50000 'Made-in-India' ventilators, Rs. 1000 crores will be used for care of migrant labourers and Rs.100 crores will be given to support vaccine development.
- The trust formed on 27th March 2020 is headed by Hon'ble Prime Minister (ex-Officio) and other ex-officio Members of the trust are Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.

Relief Measures for Migrants

- The States/UTs will be given a lumpsum assistance of total Rs. 1000 Crore from PM CARES Fund for the welfare of the migrants and poor.
 - State/UT-wise funds will be released on the weightage of
 - Population of the State/UT as per 2011 Census – 50%, weightage

- Number of positive COVID-19 cases as on date – 40% weightage and
- Equal share (10% weightage) for all states/UTs to ensure basic minimum sum for all states.
- The fund will be released to the District Collector/District Magistrate/Municipal Commissioner through the State Disaster Relief Commissioner of the States/UTs concerned.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Global Nutrition Report 2020

According to the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India is among 88 countries that are likely to miss global nutrition targets by 2025. It also identified the country as one with the highest rates of domestic inequalities in malnutrition.

About:

- According to the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India will miss targets for all four nutritional indicators for which there is data available — stunting among under-five children, anaemia among women of reproductive age, childhood overweight and exclusive breastfeeding.
- Between 2000 and 2016, underweight rates have decreased from 66.0% to 58.1% for boys and 54.2% to 50.1% in girls. However, this is still high compared with the average of 35.6% for boys and 31.8% for girls in Asia.
- In addition, 37.9% of children under five are stunted and 20.8% are wasted, compared with the Asia average of 22.7% and 9.4% respectively.
- One in two women of reproductive age is anaemic, while at the same time the rate of overweight and obesity continues to rise, affecting almost a fifth of the adults, at 21.6% of women and 17.8% of men.
- India is identified as among the three worst countries, along with Nigeria and Indonesia, for steep within-country disparities on stunting, where the levels varied four-fold across communities.

Related Info :

- In 2012, the World Health Assembly identified six nutrition targets for maternal, infant and young child nutrition to be met by 2025. These require governments to
 - reduce stunting by 40% in children under five,
 - reduce prevalence of anaemia by 50% among women in the age group of 19-49,
 - ensure 30% reduction in low-birth weight,
 - ensure no increase in childhood overweight,
 - increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months up to at least 50% and
 - reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%.
- The Global Nutrition Report is a peer-reviewed, independently produced annual publication on the state of the world's nutrition. It was conceived following the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G) in 2013. The first series was published in 2014.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MSMEs

In a historical decision, the ambit of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have been widened resulting in inclusion of many small and micro industries under this sector. This decision of changing the definition of MSMEs will increase competition and productivity in the sector.

About:

- Definition of MSME will be revised by raising the Investment limit. An additional criteria of turnover also being introduced. The distinction between manufacturing and service sector will also be eliminated.

- In a major boost to the MSME sector, collateral free loan of 3 lakh crore rupees has been announced with a moratorium of 12 months. These loans will benefit 45 lakh small and medium units.
- Another package of 20 thousand crore rupees for stressed MSMEs benefitting 2 lakh units have also been announced.
- 50 thousand crore rupees will be infused in the MSMEs through the equity channel.
- Opening up avenues for indigenous companies, tenders for Government procurement up to 200 crore rupees will no longer be through Global Tender route.
- e-Market linkage for MSMEs has been announced to ensure wider reach for sale of products from the small and medium industries.
- Government bodies and PSUs have been directed to clear all pending dues of MSMEs within next 45 days.

Employees' Provident Fund

Union Finance Minister has announced reduction of statutory provident fund contribution by both employers and employees to 10 percent of basic wages from the existing 12 per cent for the next three months.

About:

- The decision has been taken to facilitate more take-home salary for employees and give relief to employers in payment of PF dues, resulting in a liquidity ease of 6,750 crore rupees.
- The decision will be applicable on all the establishments covered under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

PF under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)?

- Besides, Ms Sitharaman also announced the extension of another scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) for three months till August this year.
- Under it the government would contribute entire 24 per cent of PF contributions till August. Under the PMGKP, payment of 12 percent of employer and 12 per cent employee contributions were made into EPF accounts.
- The total benefits accrued is about 2500 crore rupees to 72.22 lakh employees.

NBFCs/HFC/MFIs

Union Minister of Finance announced further liquidity support to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), housing finance companies (HFCs) and microfinance institutions (MFIs) under the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

About:

- Rs 30,000 crores Special Liquidity Scheme for NBFC/HFC/MFIs
- Government will launch Rs 30,000 crore Special Liquidity Scheme, liquidity being provided by RBI. Investment will be made in primary and secondary market transactions in investment grade debt paper of NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs.
- This will be 100 percent guaranteed by the Government of India.
- Rs 45,000 crores Partial credit guarantee Scheme 2.0 for Liabilities of NBFCs/MFIs
- Existing Partial Credit Guarantee scheme is being revamped and now will be extended to cover the borrowings of lower rated NBFCs, HFCs and other Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs).
- Government of India will provide 20 percent first loss sovereign guarantee to Public Sector Banks.

Income Tax

Union Finance Minister announced that Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) and Tax Collected at Source (TCS) have been reduced by 25 per cent till 31st March of next year.

About:

This decision will increase cash flow of over 50 thousand crore rupees benefitting common people.

The date for filing Income Tax return for the last financial year has also been extended till 30th November, while last date for filing tax audits has been extended from 30th September to 31st October.

Force Majeure (Under RERA)

In a relief to real estate developers, Finance Minister informed that the deadline for completion of projects will be extended by up to six months, treating the coronavirus outbreak as an event of 'force majeure' under the realty law RERA.

About:

- Urban Development ministry will issue advisory to all the States and Union Territories to treat Covid-19 period event as force majeure.
- The move will benefit real estate sector and agencies which have been entrusted to complete civil work.

Force majeure

- Force majeure is a French term that literally means "greater force." A 'force majeure' situation refers to extraordinary events and circumstances beyond human control.
- Force majeure refers to a clause that is included in contracts to remove liability for natural and unavoidable catastrophes that interrupt the expected course of events and restrict participants from fulfilling obligations.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Air Pollution

According to analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), for the first time in four decades, emissions of toxic carbon dioxide have declined in the country — thanks to an economic slowdown, growth of clean energy and the ongoing lockdown.

About:

- According to the analysis, CO2 emissions in the country fell by around 15% in March, and are likely to have fallen by 30% last month, year-on-year.
- Using the latest consumption data for coal, oil and gas, the analysts concluded that CO2 emissions fell by 30 million tonnes in the financial year 2019-20 compared to the previous fiscal.
- Power and transportation sectors are the major contributors of CO2 pollution in the country. The fall in the consumption of fossil fuels has led to the decline in CO2 emissions.
- Power generated from coal-fired plants fell by 15% in March, and 31% in the first three weeks of April. In contrast, renewable energy (RE) generation increased by 6.4% in March, and saw a slight decrease of 1.4% in the first three weeks of April.
- Not just coal, consumption of oil too has witnessed a decline. The already-slow demand in growth of oil consumption fell by 18% this March, compared to the previous year.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. In pursuit of doubling farmer's income, Indian agricultural policy must emphasize converting farmers to agripreneurs. Comment.

Answer :

The green revolution was successful in securing food security in India. However, agricultural income remain subdued over the decades. To address this mismatch the Government of India envisioned doubling farmers' income by the year 2022. Converting farmers into agripreneurs is one of the most viable strategies to achieve this target. Agripreneurs are entrepreneurs whose

main business is agriculture or agriculture allied activities. These agripreneurs could be aggregated as a corporate entity to manage the risks and attract long term capital.

Some of the ways through which the agripreneurs can help in doubling the farmers' income are as follows:

- Treating agriculture as business which includes changing the outlook of inputs like capital and output as profit could directly increase the income of farmers.
- Facilitate pooling of resources like the landholdings can be pooled together to facilitate mechanised farming.
- They could become the service providers to cater to the requisite services at the village level. These include the input borrowing and distribution, hiring of agricultural equipment like tractors, threshers and harvesters.
- Related opportunities existing in the livestock husbandry sector for providing breeding, immunization, disease diagnostic and treatment services could be availed.
- Agripreneurs can also become input producers. These home entrepreneurs can produce biopesticides, soil amendments, biofertilizers and vermicompost at the village level

Policy level interventions to convert farmers into agripreneurs requires

- Promoting scientific agriculture micro-irrigation along with the nutrient application on a very large scale
- Facilitating timely and adequate and timely loans through Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and from institutional sources like co-operatives, commercial banks and NABARD itself.
- Providing greater market access by replacing the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act with the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (APLM) Act. and by overcoming deficiencies in agricultural marketing through e-NAM.
- Agriculture export policy should facilitate farmers to compete in the global market too.
- Farm Income Insurance Programme should cover all the cropping season to provide these entrepreneurs with financial and social security.
- Promoting more agricultural research to improve varieties of seeds, agricultural tools and equipment to enhance production and hence increase farmers' income.
- Providing better industrial and entrepreneurial education discipline will enable entrepreneurs to naturally take advantage of the vast human resource availability.
- The creation of a freer export regime and abolition of the Essential Commodities Act.
- Other such interventions may include establishing Special Agriculture Zones (SAZ), promoting agri-tourism, generation of rural non-farm employment and leveraging the flagship programmes of the government.

Conclusion Thus, if National agriculture policy facilitates converting farmers into agripreneurs, it has adequate potential to not only double the farmers' income but also contribute significantly to the national income.