GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana

32 projects have been sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (**PMKSY**) of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (**MoFPI**).

- The projects are spread across almost 17 States, leveraging an investment worth ⊠406 crores.
- These projects envisage the creation of direct and indirect employment, especially in rural areas.

In 2016, MoFPI introduced an umbrella Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters or **SAMPADA**, which was proposed to be implemented with an allocation of ⊠6,000 crores for the period of 2016-20.

- In 2017, SAMPADA was renamed as the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana** (PMKSY).
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme**.

Objectives:

- To supplement agriculture.
- To create processing and preservation capacities.
- To modernise and expand existing food processing units with a view to increasing the level of processing.
- To add value leading to the reduction of wastage.

Seven component schemes under PMKSY:

- Mega Food Parks.
- Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure.
- Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters.
- Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages.
- Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities.
- Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure.
- Human Resources and Institutions.

Under PMKSY, capital subsidy in the form of grants-in-aid ranging from 35% to 75% of the eligible project cost subject to a maximum specified limit is provided to investors under the various schemes for undertaking infrastructure, logistic projects and setting up of food processing units in the country.

Initiative for Gender Equality in Science

The President of India has announced a few initiatives for gender advancement and equality in academic and research institutions on the National Science Day (28th February) celebrations.

The theme for National Science Day 2020 is "**Women in Science**".

Key Points

Vigyan Jyoti Scheme:

- Vigyan Jyoti Scheme is launched by the **Department of Science & Technology (DST).**
- It is intended to create a level-playing field for the meritorious girls in high school to pursue **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)** in their higher education.
- It also offers exposure for girl students from the rural background to help to plan their journey from school to a job of their choice in the field of science.

GATI Scheme:

The Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (**GATI**) will develop a comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing Gender Equality in STEM.

POLITY AND GOVERNACE

The Project Monitoring Group (PMG)

- The Project Monitoring Group (PMG) is an institutional mechanism for the expedited resolution of issues and regulatory bottlenecks in projects with investments upward Rs. 500 Crores in India.
- Currently, PMG is situated at Invest India, Department of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce.
- It was set up as a special cell in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India in 2013 and was subsequently brought under the administrative control of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in 2015.
- The relocation was enabled in order to create a one-stop facilitation destination for investors at all stages of the investment process, including issue resolution.
- The PMG seeks to enlist the unresolved project issues in respect of all mid and large-sized Public, Private and 'Public-Private Partnership' (PPP) Projects.

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DPIIT is mandated as the nodal body for the review of public and private projects facing challenges and facilitates their resolution through PMG.

The issues taken up by PMG are both at **Union** and **State-Level.**

DWAR PRADAY YOJANA

- **Dwar Praday Yojana** (Door Delivery System) is a pilot project that was started in Indore by the Government of **Madhya Pradesh.**
- **About the Scheme**
  - Applicants living within the boundaries of the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) get **five types of documents** — domicile certificate, income certificate, birth certificate, death certificate and copy of Khasra-Khatauni (a land ownership document) — **delivered** at their **home within 24 hours of applying online.**
  - The administration has engaged a **local courier agency,** which delivers the documents after collecting them from public service centres.
- The central idea is to **improve the government's service delivery mechanism.**

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Red Snow

The phenomenon of "red snow" or "watermelon" has been observed over the last few weeks around Ukraine's Vernadsky Research Base, off the coast of Antarctica's northernmost peninsula.

The snow is red because of a red-pigmented, microscopic algae called **Chlamydomonas nivalis chlamydomonas**, which thrives in freezing water as the ice melts.

Key Points

- This phenomenon has been known since ancient times but now it raises concerns about climate change.
- Aristotle is believed to be one of the first to give a written account of red snow, over 2,000 years ago. He attributed the redness of the snow to the colour of worms and grub (larva of an insect), which are found in long-lying snow.
- According to modern-day scientists, it is an algae species, **Chlamydomonas nivalis chlamydomonas** which exists in the snow in the polar and glacial regions and carries a **red pigment** to keep itself warm.
- Algae contain chlorophyll (green pigment) as well as a red carotene layer in their cells which mixes with the green colour to cause snow to look like "raspberry jam".
- This layer is also said to protect the algae from ultraviolet radiation.
- These algae change the snow's **albedo** (the amount of light or radiation the snow surface is able to reflect back).
- The intensity of the redness increases with the dense presence of the algae. The darker tinge leads to more absorption of heat by the snow. Subsequently, the ice melts faster.
- The melting is good for the microbes that need the liquid water to survive and thrive but it is bad for already melting glaciers.

FISHING CAT AND OTTERS

Recently, the presence of a viable, breeding population of a **fishing cat** has been found in **Chilika Lake.**

- Further, the presence of a **smooth-coated otter** and an **Eurasian otter** has also been recorded in the **lake.**

Fishing Cat

- **Scientific Name:** Prionailurus viverrinus
- **Habitat:** In India, fishing cats are mainly found in the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans, on the foothills of the Himalayas along the Ganga and Brahmaputra river valleys and in the Western Ghats.
- **Protection Status**
  - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
  - **CITES:** Appendix II
  - **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Smooth-Coated Otter

- **Scientific Name:** Lutrogale perspicillata
- **Habitat:** Smooth-coated otters are distributed throughout India from the Himalayas to the south.
- **Protection Status**
  - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable

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➢ **CITES:** Appendix II
➢ **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule II

Eurasian Otter

- **Scientific Name:** Lutra lutra
- **Habitat:** Throughout Europe and Asia from Ireland in the west as far as eastern Russia and China. They are also found in north Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) and the Middle East (Israel, Jordan, Iraq and Iran).
- **Protection Status**
  ➢ **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
  ➢ **CITES:** Appendix I
  ➢ **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule II

AGRICULTURE

National Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Conference 2020

The 11th National Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Conference was held in New Delhi.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)

- KVK is an integral part of the **National Agricultural Research System (NARS).** The first KVK was established in 1974 at **Puducherry.**
- The **mandate** of KVK is technology assessment and demonstration for its application and capacity development.
- It aims at assessment of location specific technology modules in agriculture and allied enterprises, through technology assessment, refinement and demonstrations.
- KVKs also produce quality technological products (seed, planting material, bio-agents, livestock) and make it available to farmers.
- The KVK scheme is **100% financed by the Government of India** and the KVKs are sanctioned to Agricultural Universities, ICAR institutes, related Government Departments and Non Government Organizations (NGOs) working in Agriculture.
- KVKs act as a bridge between the laboratories and farmland. According to the Government, these are crucial to fulfilling the target of **doubling farmers' income by 2022.**

Developments in Agriculture

- R&D has been done in the Agriculture sector.
  ➢ **Superior crop varieties** have been released. (Eg;-Wheat: HD 4728 (Pusa Malvi))
  ➢ 171 mobile apps developed for farmers. (Eg:-**Kisan Suvidha)**
  ➢ More than three lakh **Common Service Centres (CSCs)** opened.
  ➢ **eNAM portal** has been created so that the farmer gets a better price for his produce.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, ARCHITECTURE

Ekam fest

The week long exhibition-cum-fair **"EKAM Fest"** is being organised by the **National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation (NHFDC)** in New Delhi from 2nd March, 2020.

Key Points

- EKAM Fest is an effort for **promoting entrepreneurship and knowledge among the Divyangjan community**. EKAM stands for Entrepreneurship, Knowledge, Awareness and Marketing.
- Further, it will help in generating awareness among society about Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) entrepreneurs' potential.
- In the first Ekam Fest, **Divyang Entrepreneur and Artisans** from all over the country have been invited. The fest will see vibrant products ranging from handicraft, handloom, Embroidery work and dry fruits.

National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation

- NHFDC is a corporation under the aegis of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** and has been working **since 1997.**
- It is registered as a company **not for profit** and provides financial assistance to the Divyangjan/Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan/PwDs) for their economic rehabilitation and provides a number of skill development programmes to empower them to grow & sustain their enterprises.
- **Some of the initiatives of NHFDC**

- ➢ **NHFDC Swavalamban Kendra (NSK):** NHFDC has taken an initiative to establish PwD owned micro skill training Centers throughout the country for skill training of PwDs.
- ➢ **Safe Cabs in Delhi and Indore:** NHFDC has made arrangements with Sakha Cabs (Social enterprise) where the PwD owned commercial vehicles will be driven by the women drivers to provide safe taxi options for the women, children and senior citizen commuters.
- ➢ **Safe Drinking Water E Carts:** NHFDC has recently agreed to finance E-carts (owned by PwDs) fitted with RO water dispensing vending machines.

WORLD HERITAGE LIST 2020

- Recently, the Minister of State of Culture and Tourism has informed Lok Sabha that India has submitted two nomination dossiers namely **'Dholavira: A Harappan City'** and **'Monuments and Forts of Deccan Sultanate'** for inclusion in the **World Heritage List for the year 2020.**

Dholavira: A Harappan City

- The City of Dholavira located in **Khadir island of the Rann of Kutch (Gujarat)** belonged to the mature **Harappan phase.**
- It was excavated by **R.S Bisht in 1985.**
- It demonstrates a **highly organised system of town planning with perfected proportions, street-pattern** and **an efficient water conservation system** that supported life for **more than 1200 years (3000 BCE to 1800 BCE)** against harsh hot arid climate.
  - ➢ The water conservation methods of Dholavira are unique and measures as one of the most efficient systems of the ancient world.
- The presence of a three-tier zonation comprising of a distinct upper (citadel, bailey) and middle (having a distinct street-pattern, large scale enclosure and a ceremonial ground) towns enclosed by a lower town (with narrower streets, smaller enclosures and industrial area) – distinguishes the city of **Dholavira** from other metropolises of the **Indus Valley Civilisation.**

Monuments and Forts of Deccan Sultanate

- The 'Monuments of the Deccan Sultanate' demonstrates the **convergence of national and international styles of Islamic architecture and their intersections with the prevalent Hindu architecture** of the period southern Indian in present-day Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh,
- It comprises of **four components** namely,
  - o **Bahmani Monuments at Gulbarga, Karnataka**
    - It primarily comprises the **Gulbarga Fort with the Great Mosque** in the Fort, Jami Masjid and the **Haft Gumbad complex with seven tombs.**
    - Gulbarga was the **first capital of the Bahmani dynasty.**
  - o **Bahmani and Barid Shahi Monuments at Bidar, Karnataka**
    - It includes monuments at Bidar dating from late 15th to the early 16th centuries comprise of the Bidar Fort, the Madrasa Mahmud Gawan, the Bahamani tombs at Ashtur and the Barid Shahi tombs.
    - The significant feature of Bidar is the **sophisticated system of gates and sluices** (A sluice is a water channel controlled at its head by a gate.) that could be used when required to flood segments of the moat and thus preserve water.
  - o **Adil Shahi Monuments at Bijapur, Karnataka**
    - These monuments date from the late 15th to the late 17th centuries.
    - These are an ensemble of 80 small and big monuments including the fortifications, gates, water systems and tanks, several mosques and tombs and palatial structures.
    - The most remarkable monuments within the fort include the **Gol Gumbaz** which is the **second largest dome in the world.**
  - o **Qutb Shahi Monuments at Hyderabad Andhra Pradesh**
    - It comprises of Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs and Charminar that symbolize the **Qutb Shahi Dynasty.**
    - Golconda is a fortified citadel and an early capital city of the Qutb Shahi dynasty.
    - The tombs of Qutb Shahis are a mausoleum complex comprised of the tombs of the Royal family and the officials who faithfully served them.
    - Charminar is a ceremonial Gateway built to celebrate the foundation of Hyderabad, a new Millennial City, in 1591 A.D.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

RaIDer-X

An **explosive detection device, RaIDer-X,** was unveiled at the National Workshop on Explosive Detection (NWED-2020) in Pune (Maharashtra).

- The Workshop was organized by the **High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL), Pune.**

Key Points

- RaIDer-X has the capability to detect 20 explosives within a distance of about 2 metres. Bulk explosive in concealed condition can also be detected by the device.
- The data library can be built in the system to expand its capability to detect a number of explosives in pure form as well as with the contaminants.
- The device has **various applications** including narcotics, for local police, for customs and other detection agencies who need to detect various elements which may be explosive or non-explosive in nature.
- RaIDer-X has been **co-developed by HEMRL, Pune and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.**

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

USA-Taliban Peace Deal

The **United States has signed a** historic deal **with Taliban** insurgents that could pave the way **for ending the 18-year-war in Afghanistan.**

- The deal was signed in **Doha (Qatar)** and thus termed as **Doha Agreement.**
- India has **welcomed the signing of the U.S.-Taliban peace deal** by **accepting** an invitation to attend the meeting for the same in Doha.

Key Elements of the Deal

- The agreement set out a course for the **next 14 months.**
- **Comprehensive Ceasefire** between the Afghan Government and Taliban.
- Timeline for the **withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan will be carried out,** provided the Taliban adhere to their security guarantees and ceasefire.
- The **prevention of the use of Afghanistan by any group or individual against the security of the United States and its allies.**
- The facilitation of an **intra-Afghan dialogue.**
  - The participants of intra-Afghan negotiations will discuss the date and modalities of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, including agreement over the future political roadmap of Afghanistan.
- In turn, the Taliban has demanded the **release of 5000 fighters from Afghan-run jails.**

Peace Deal and the Possible Consequences

- Taliban has the **ultimate goal of imposing Sharia in their respective regions.** This is in conflict with what the people in Afghanistan want.
- Afghanistan has its own **Constitution and people want to be governed as per the Constitution.** This will make **any peace deal that they would have, unsustainable.**
- The Taliban will **hardly share power with the Afghan Government.** Thus it is quite possible that even after the peace deal, the country will be **back to civil war again.**
- Then, the world will face **twin challenges in Afghanistan: ISIS and Taliban.**

India's Stand

- **India has been always supportive of the inclusive peace process,** specifically **Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled.**
- The **participation of the Afghan government's delegation during the Doha agreement** as well as the **upcoming intra-Afghan peace negotiations** would be following the path desired by India.
- The deal has reiterated India's commitment to Afghanistan's pursuit of **"sustainable peace and reconciliation".**
- Thus, India has **accepted** the Doha Agreement(2020).

Possible Issues for India

- **Security of India:**
  - The deal mentions about prevention of the use of Afghanistan by any group against the security of the **United States and its allies.** However, it is **unclear whether India, which is not a U.S. ally, is included in this clause,** and whether Pakistan-backed groups that threaten India, would still operate in Afghanistan.

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- **Benefit for Pakistan:**
  - o The deal also promises to take Taliban leaders off the **UN Security Council's** sanctions list, which could considerably bring down the number of terrorists harboured by Pakistan. This might **benefit Pakistan during the June 2020 FATF Plenary.**
- **Sidelining of Intra-Afghan Dialogue:**
  - o The U.S. has committed to clear five bases and withdrawal of troops and it intends to submit to the Taliban-led government. Thus, priority to future Taliban led government may **sideline the "Intra-Afghan" dialogue and India's support for the election process for leadership in Afghanistan.**
- **One-sided Deal:**
  - o The deal is more burdened with the **Taliban demands,** while the actual terms of the 'peace deal' are yet to be negotiated between the Taliban and the Afghan side, facilitated by the U.S. and thus deal seems to be a one-sided deal.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Discuss the significance of National Infrastructure Pipeline for India. Also examine the associated challenges.(250 words)

Ans. Recently, the Government has released a report of the task force on the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) for 2019-2025. Accordingly, total project capital expenditure in infrastructure sectors in India during the fiscals 2020 to 2025 is projected at over Rs 102 lakh crore.

NIP includes economic and social infrastructure projects in sectors such as Energy (24%), Roads (19%), Urban (16%), and Railways (13%) amount to around 70% of the projected capital expenditure in infrastructure in India.

Significance of the National Infrastructure Pipeline:

- NIP will enable a forward outlook on infrastructure projects which will create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, thereby making growth more inclusive.

- It is estimated that India should invest $4.5 trillion in infrastructure by 2030 to support faster growth. The National Infrastructure Pipeline is a part of that attempt to invest $4.5 trillion.
- The National Infrastructure Pipeline will ensure that infrastructure projects are adequately prepared and launched.
- It will help in stepping-up annual infrastructure investment to achieve the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $5 trillion by 2024-25.
- It will boost the agrarian economy by strengthening agricultural and rural infrastructure.
- It will further increase the connectivity in India, especially in rural areas, through the expansion of roads and railways.
- It will ensure credit availability from the government sources to boost the economic growth, in a time when there is a lack of private investment.
- Well-developed infrastructure enhances the level of economic activity, creates additional fiscal space by improving the revenue base of the government, and ensures the quality of expenditure focused in productive areas.

Challenges

- ➢ **Overcoming slowdown:** The policy of high government spending in infrastructure energises demand in other sectors and led to more fund flows to various sectors besides creating valuable assets.
- ➢ Challenges
- ➢ **Credit availability** is the biggest challenge in the backdrop of the NPA crisis. Envisaged Private sector participation in capital expenditure (22%) may largely suffer due to this.

- ➢ **State governments' financial commitment** may not be realised because of fiscal concerns. Presently, more than 20 states already have a debt-GSDP ratio of above 25 per cent.
- ➢ **Land acquisition** is a big challenge for the completion of infrastructure projects.

Conclusion

Availability of quality infrastructure is a prerequisite to achieve broad-based and inclusive growth on a sustainable basis. If the concerns regarding fiscal availability are addressed properly, National Infrastructure Pipeline would be a massive exercise to realise the vision of becoming a 5 trillion $ economy by 2024.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQ

1. Consider the following statements regarding International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
    1. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is an international financial institution and specialized United Nations agency.
    2. IFAD invest in rural people, empowering them to increase their food security, improve the nutrition of their families and increase their incomes.
    3. India is a member State of IFAD.
    Which of the above statements is/are correct?
    a) 1, 2
    b) 1, 3
    c) 2, 3
    d) 1, 2, 3

2. Consider the following statements regarding Wetlands.
    1. In India, Wetlands are regulated under the Environment(Protection) Rules, 1986.
    2. Wetlands International is an independent, not-for-profit, global organisation that works to sustain and restore wetlands and their resources for people and biodiversity.
    Which of the above statements is/are correct?
    a) 1 only
    b) 2 only
    c) Both 1 and 2
    d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. Consider the following statements regarding Geographical indication (GI) tag.
    1. A GI tag conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
    2. Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products.
    3. Kerala has the highest number of GI tagged products.
    Which of the above statements is/are correct?
    a) 1, 3
    b) 2, 3
    c) 1, 2
    d) 1, 2, 3

4. Consider the following statements regarding Tenth schedule of the Indian constitution.
    1. The Tenth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution in the 42nd Amendment Act, which lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection.
    2. The Supreme Court held that the decision of speaker is final on the question of disqualification on ground of defection.
    3. The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least one-third of its legislators are in favour of the merger.
    Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?
    a) 3 only
    b) 1, 3
    c) 2, 3
    d) 1, 2, 3

5. Pakistan and Somalia have recently declared locust emergencies. Locust attack is related to
    a) New form of Antimicrobial resistance
    b) Intense Tropical Cyclone
    c) Pest attack
    d) Terrorist attack

6. Consider the following statements regarding Solar Risk Mitigation Initiative (SRMI).
    1. Solar Risk Mitigation Initiative (SRMI) is developed by International Energy Agency to address the challenge of climate financing.
    2. SRMI aims to support countries in developing sustainable solar programs that will attract private investments and so reduce reliance on public finance
    3. It provides technical assistance to help countries develop evidence-based solar targets and implement a sustainable solar program.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

  a) 1, 2

  b) 2, 3

  c) 1, 3

  d) 1, 2, 3

7. The official committees that have estimated the number of people living in poverty in India are

  1. Y K Alagh committee

  2. D T Lakdawala committee

  3. Suresh Tendulkar committee

  4. C Rangarajan committee

Select the correct answer code:

a) 1, 3, 4

b) 2, 3, 4

c) 3, 4

d) 1, 2, 3, 4

8. Consider the following statements regarding 2019 World Air Quality Report.

  1. The 2019 World Air Quality Report is released by the pollution tracker IQAir and Greenpeace.

  2. The ranking is based on a comparison of PM2.5 levels.

  3. China emerged as the most polluted country for PM 2.5.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

  a) 1, 2

  b) 2, 3

  c) 1, 3

  d) 2 only

9. Over the last few weeks, photographs of "red snow" around Ukraine's Vernadsky Research Base, off the coast of Antarctica's northernmost peninsula, have gone viral. Consider the following statements regarding Red snow.

  1. The red colour is because of the alga species that exists in snow in the polar and glacial regions, which carries a red pigment to keep itself warm.

  2. The red snow slows the process of melting of ice.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

a) 1 only

b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. Consider the following statements about Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM).

  1. It is a new form of BOT Annuity model.

  2. The government will contribute 60% of the project cost in the first five years through annual payments.

  3. There is no right to collect toll for the developer.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1, 2

b) 2, 3

c) 3 only

d) 1, 3