

GOVERNANCE**The Digital India Transformation**

Recently, Digital India, a transformative programme has completed 8 years.

Digital India Mission

- It is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

- Launched on July 1, 2015.

- **Vision Areas:**

- Digital Infrastructure as a Core Utility to Every Citizen
- Governance & Services on Demand
- Digital Empowerment of Citizens

- **Pillars of Digital India**

- **Broadband Highways**— This covers three sub components, namely Broadband for All – Rural, Broadband for All – Urban and National Information Infrastructure (NII).

- **Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity**- This initiative focuses on network penetration and filling the gaps in connectivity in the country.

- **Public Internet Access Programme**- The two sub components of Public Internet Access Programme are Common Services Centres (CSCs) and Post Offices as multi-service centres.

- **e-Governance:** Reforming Government through Technology- Government Process Re-engineering using IT to simplify and make the government processes more efficient is critical for transformation to make the delivery of government services more effective across various government domains and therefore needs to be implemented by all Ministries/ Departments.

- **e-Kranti** – Electronic Delivery of Services- To improve the delivery of public services and simplify the process of accessing them. In this regard, several e-governance initiatives have been undertaken by various State Governments and Central Ministries to usher in an era of e-Government. e-Governance in India has steadily evolved from the computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency.

- **Information for All**- This pillar aims to ensure transparency and availability of reliable data generated by the line ministries for use, reuse and redistribution for the people of India.

- **Electronics Manufacturing**- This pillar focuses on promoting electronics manufacturing in the country.

- **IT for Jobs**- This pillar focuses on providing training to the youth in the skills required for availing employment opportunities in the IT/ITES sector.

- **Early Harvest Programmes**- This pillar consists of a group of different short-term projects which have immediate effect on the Indian digital ecosystem like IT platform for mass messaging, crowd Sourcing of eGreetings, biometric attendance in the government offices, WI-FI in all universities etc.

- **Achievements**

- India today is home to more than **75 crore smartphones**, **133 crore Aadhaar cards**, more than **80 crore internet users**, has 4G and is now accelerating towards 5G. Above all, it has among the lowest data tariffs in the world.

- **Digital India** solved some of the most **difficult problems** the country had been facing for decades. Ensuring delivery of government schemes to its beneficiaries without leakage or misuse remained a herculean task.

- The **Jan-Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM)** trinity has ensured that the poorest receive **every penny of their entitled benefits**. Financial benefits worth nearly Rs 23 lakh crore have been transferred using DBT technology in the last eight years. This has led to savings of Rs 2.22 lakh crore of public money.

- **During pandemic** the **digital ecosystem** was also useful in tackling the challenge of the pandemic. From bulk messages to **people in quarantine areas** giving useful **information and using digital technology** for vaccination to digital education for students when schools were closed, there have been shining examples of **empowerment, inclusion and opportunity**.

- **Land Record**, leveraging the power of **drones and GIS technologies**, SVAMITVA Yojana is **providing digital land records** to the rightful owners. It reduces disputes and also **facilitates monetisation of land for availing bank loans** and enables scientific village level planning. Nearly 2.14 crore land parcels have been digitised so far.
- **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas**" Digital India reflects our core philosophy of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas".
- **Bharat Net** to provide high-speed broadband to all the villages, optical fibre has been laid in 1.83 lakh gram panchayats under **Bharat Net**.
- **Digital Payments** India has emerged as the **fastest-growing ecosystem** for fintech innovations.
- **India's digital payments revolution** is being appreciated globally. This was made possible due to innovative digital payment products like UPI and Aadhaar-Enabled Payment Systems (AEPS). When banks and ATMs were shut during Covid-19, AEPS-based micro-ATM at CSCs and post offices provided doorstep delivery of cash.
- India is rapidly becoming atma nirbhar in **electronics manufacturing**.
- **Services to citizens made easy:** Getting Driving licence, birth certificate, paying electricity bill, paying water bill, filing income tax return, have become very easy, very fast with the help of Digital India. All this is happening in villages, in Common Service Centres (CSCs) near people's homes.
- **PM WANI:** Access points are being created so that rural youth can connect with high-speed internet for better services and education.
- Also, 5G technology will bring significant changes in the world, and India is preparing itself to make the most of this opportunity.
- **Challenges**
- The issues pertaining to taxation and other regulatory guidelines have proved to be roadblocks in **advancing with the programme**.
- **Digital divide** : Currently ,many villages remain deprived of **mobile connectivity** because their locations is not commercially viable for service providers,
- **Way Forward**
- In the last eight years, the success of Digital India only confirms that it has a robust future in India's development.
- Digital India has played a crucial role in citizen services. The movement will be taken forward by leveraging futuristic technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and blockchain.
- The government needs to look at all possibilities and go into overdrive to bridge the digital divide.
- In rural and remote areas, private sector players should be incentivised to provide last mile connectivity.

PRELIMS

1. GLOBSEC 2022 Bratislava Forum

- The Minister of External Affairs responded to a question on India's official position on the Ukraine conflict at the Globsec 2022 forum in Slovakia.
- It is the most **important international strategic conference** on the **frontlines of the new divided world**.
- It has established itself as the leading platform in the Central Eastern Europe region and one of the top strategic conferences globally.
- It facilitates the free exchange of ideas and provides a meeting place for stakeholders from all sectors of society to actively shape the future .
- **This year's :**
 - Mobilise Support & Action for Ukraine and the Broader European Neighbourhood
 - Mobilise Resources of the West to Strengthen Resilience at Home
 - Mobilise Global Coalitions to Defy Authoritarian Powers
- **Major Highlights**
- Europe is witnessing an **unprecedented conflict** of the new post-war era following the **illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine**.

- India stated that **Europe's problems are the world's problems** but the **world's problems are not Europe's problems.**" Pointing out that **India's problems with China** "predates" the ongoing conflict in Europe.
 - India had "**unequivocally condemned**" killings in the Ukrainian city of Bucha and also supported calls for an "independent probe" into the incident following global outrage.
 - India would not accept any "**construct based on choosing between a Western camp and a Russia-China camp**", adding that India was entitled to make its choices after examining the issues.
2. **Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**
- The Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are areas in India **notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), GoI** around Protected Areas, National Park and Wildlife sanctuaries.
 - **Purpose:**
 - To create some kind of "**shock absorbers**" to the protected areas by regulating and managing the activities around such areas.
 - Therefore, these areas **act as a buffer** for protected areas and **reduce developmental pressures** around a wildlife sanctuary or national park.
 - They also act as a **transition zone** from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.
 - **Range:**
 - All identified areas around Protected Areas and wildlife corridors to be declared as ecologically fragile under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (National Wildlife Action Plan, 2002-2016).**
 - Eco-sensitive Zone could go upto 10 Kms around **Protected Areas**.
 - In cases where sensitive corridors, connectivity and ecologically important patches, crucial for landscape linkage, are **even beyond 10 Kms width**.
 - Further, Eco-sensitive zones **may not be uniform** all around and it could be variable width and extent.
 - **Prohibited activities:**
 - Activities like industries which cause pollution Commercial mining, saw mills, establishment of major hydroelectric projects (HEP), commercial use of wood, Tourism, discharge of effluents or any solid waste or production of hazardous substances are all prohibited.
 - **Regulated activities:**
 - Activities like felling of trees, establishment of hotels and resorts, commercial use of natural water, erection of electrical cables, drastic change of agriculture system, e.g. adoption of heavy technology, pesticides etc., widening of roads.
 - **Permitted activities:**
 - Activities like ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, use of renewable energy sources, adoption of green technology for all activities are permitted.
 - **Significance**
 - ESZs help in **in-situ conservation**, which deals with conservation of an **endangered species** in its natural habitat. For example, the conservation of the One-horned Rhino of Kaziranga National Park, Assam.
 - They **minimize forest depletion and man-animal conflict**.
 - The protected areas are based on the core and buffer model of management, through which **local area communities are also protected** and benefitted.
3. **Pacific Island Countries (PICs)**
- **SEAP Network:** The Pacific Island Countries (PICs) were formerly part of the South East Asia and the Pacific (SEAP) Network.
 - **The Pacific Island Countries are a cluster of 14 states** which are located largely in the tropical zone of the Pacific Ocean between Asia, Australia and the Americas.

- They include Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- The islands are divided on the basis of physical and human geography into three distinct parts Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia.
- The islands are very small in land area, and are spread wide across the vast equatorial swathe of the Pacific Ocean.
- The Network is also supported by Australia, a developed country partner that has continuously provided support to the network.

Strategic significance of the PICs

- Largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs):
 - Though they are some of the smallest and least populated states, they have some of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the world.
 - Large EEZs translate into huge economic potential due to the possibility of utilising the wealth of fisheries, energy, minerals and other marine resources present in such zones.
 - Kiribati and FSM, both PICs, have EEZs larger than that of India.
- Strategic capabilities:
 - These countries have played an important role in major power rivalry as springboards for power projection and laboratories for developing and demonstrating strategic capabilities.
- Power centre since colonial era:
 - The major powers of the colonial era competed with each other to gain control over these strategic territories.
- Major theatres of conflict during the Second World War:
 - The Pacific islands also acted as one of the major theatres of conflict during the Second World War between imperial Japan and the U.S.
 - Due to the remoteness of these islands from the Soviet Union and major population centres of the world, some of the major nuclear weapon test sites of the U.S., the U.K. and France were located here.
- Potential vote bank:
 - The 14 PICs, bound together by shared economic and security concerns, account for as many votes in the United Nations, and act as a potential vote bank for major powers to mobilise international opinion.

4. World's first fishing cat census done in Chilika

- The Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, has 176 fishing cats, according to a census conducted by Chilika Development Authority (CDA) in collaboration with The Fishing Cat Project (TFCP).
- This is the world's first population estimation of the fishing cat, which has been conducted outside the protected area network.
- According to CDA, the estimation was conducted in two phases. Phase-I was conducted in 2021 in the 115 sq km marshland present in the north and north-eastern section of Chilika and its surrounding areas. Phase II was conducted in 2022 in the Parikud side along the coastal islands of Chilika

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. "Pressure group play a vital role in influencing public policy making in India" Explain How the Business associations contribute to public policies (150)

Introduction

A pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. They are different from the political parties. Their activities are confined to the protection and promotion of the interests of their members by influencing the government.

- The pressure groups influence the policymaking and policy implementation in the government through methods like lobbying, correspondence, publicity, propagandising, petitioning, public debating, and so forth.
- A business association refers to membership organisations that are engaged in and supportive of the promotion of the business interests of their members. Since businesses are strongly affected by public policies, it is in their best interest to stay informed about public policies and to try to influence governmental decision making and public policy.
- In India, examples of business association include Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Federation of All India Food Grain Dealers Association (FAIFDA), etc.

Contribution of business associations to public policies:

- They engage with the policy makers and communicate the grievances of the industries to the government. They, thus, influence the policies by way of articulating the views and suggestions of the industry.
- They provide a potent platform for consensus-building on key issues. In this regard, they often conduct workshops, seminars and business meets to discuss various policies.
- The business associations provide useful and credible research on existing and newer developments in areas such as industrial operations, infrastructure and technology. Likewise, they provide valuable information on new developments in foreign trade. All these go a long way in influencing the public policies.

Conclusion

- Besides, in a system of representative democracy, the business groups influence the political process through several ways such as funding election expenses of the parties, mobilising the support of the voters, etc. The more organised the group is, the more influential it is in the political process, and so in public policymaking.

QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements with respect to SHRESHTA Scheme
 1. The scheme aims to provide quality education for meritorious Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students in the CBSE-affiliated residential schools across the country.
 2. The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Khonmoh Range, a treasure trove of fossils from the Tethys Sea, is located in which of the following?
 - a) Uttarakhand
 - b) Jammu & Kashmir**
 - c) Himachal Pradesh
 - d) Arunachal Pradesh
3. Consider the following statements with respect to Section 8 of Companies Act, 2013
 1. A company registered under this section should promote commerce, art, science, sports or any such other object.
 2. These companies are prohibited from payment of any dividend to its members.Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. How is Barcodes different from the Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) Tags?
 1. RFID uses radio waves to communicate data whereas barcodes use light to read the black-and-white pattern.
 2. Barcodes require line of sight whereas RFID tags does not need any line of sight.

3. RFID are simple and easy to copy or counterfeit, whereas Barcodes are more complicated.
4. In contrast to barcode scanners, RFID scanners can process dozens of tags in a single second. Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- 3 and 4 only
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 1, 2 and 4 only**
 - 1, 2, 3 and 4
5. Consider the following statements regarding High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) artillery rockets:
- Artillery rockets are propelled by a liquid-fuel motor and have the capability to carry a variety of warheads.
 - HIMARS truck carries only one pod of munitions and is manufactured by the United States.
 - HIMARS and Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) used together from a mobile platform amounts to firepower that is similar to an airstrike.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only**
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
6. Consider the following statements regarding the Pacific Island Countries (PICs):
- They are largely located in the temperate zone of the Pacific Ocean between Asia, Australia, and the Americas.
 - The islands are very small in land area and are spread wide across the vast equatorial swathe of the Pacific Ocean.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
7. World's first fishing cat census recently conducted in which of the following state ?
- Odisha**
 - Kerala
 - Andhra Pradesh
 - Bihar
8. Recently which country issues "India Out" campaign?
- Maldives**
 - Myanmar
 - Nepal
 - China
9. Recently Cabinet has approved the 540 MW Kwar Hydroelectric Project in Kishtwardistrict of Jammu and Kashmir. It is constructed on which river?
- Jhelum
 - Chenab**
 - Ravi
 - Beas
10. Which of the following statement(s) regarding *World Milk Day* is/are true ?
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations established World Milk Day in 2001.
 - The theme for this year is "Dairy Net Zero".
 - Both**
 - None