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FOR UPSC ASPIRANTS

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GS 1 History Culture Social issues and Geography	2
Bowing down to patriarchy - Women's reservation in Nagaland	2
Sex offender registries	4
Planning for the people - urban planning in India	4
GS 2 Indian Polity and International Relations	6
The temptation to go viral- The Good Samaritan law	6
Necessary limit - Capping the prices of coronary stents by NPPA	7
Ageing with dignity - Problems faced by the elderly in India	8
Basic income and mental health gains - Issues faced by mentally ill patients in India	9
Protecting the rights of tribals - bilateral investment treaties and tribals	9
GS 2 International Relations	10
A new dawn in Indo-Bangla relations	10
Speak in our own voice -India China relations and other World Powers	11
Seeing the light -India U. S dispute in WTO	12
GS 3 Indian Economy	13
Tax and transparency - Increased discretionary powers to tax officers	13
Welcome push to rural India's aspirations - Budget and rural India	14
A bankable idea	15
Food processing sector in India	16
GS 3 Environment and Ecology	17
Solar power breaks a price barrier	17
The ecological balance-sheet	18
Smoke on the water - Editorial	19
Shining bright Increasing solar power Capacity in India	21
GS 3 Science and Technology	22
Working on the ISRO principle	23
GS 3 Security challenges	24
The IS challenge	24

GS 1 History Culture Social issues and Geography

Bowing down to patriarchy - Women's reservation in Nagaland

Why women's reservation in Urban local bodies in Nagaland is important?

Mains : **GS 1** Role of women and women's organization, population and associated

issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

GS 2 Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein. .

The issue

Women are given 33% or more reservation in urban and rural local bodies according to the constitution

How has the reservation of women helped ?

Rural areas : Improved local governance, sanitation, irrigation facilities and delivery of Public services.

Urban areas : Gender sensitisation by civil societies and political parties increased

The Nagaland issue

- Tribal bodies are opposing women's reservation
- State government is bowing to the tribal bodies demand and asked the centre to exempt the state from Part IX A of the constitution
- Nagaland Government declared the election conducted with 33% reservation for women as null and void.

Why Nagas want an exemption to law ?

Tribal bodies in Nagaland feel reservation for women in municipal bodies would violate Article 371A of the Constitution, which provide special status to Nagaland regarding preservation of customary laws.

The way forward

- Constitution and democracy should not be undermined by vested interests.
- The large turnout in elections that took place shows that the people are in favour of giving reservation to women
- India being an overwhelmingly patriarchal society , had, for decades , tried to emancipate women from the backwardness and exploitations through many legislations. The 73rd and 74th amendment to the constitution offers, to this regard, reservation for women's representation in local administrative bodies. Denial of such well directed Constitutional Right would prove counter productive to the efforts of the government and the country as a whole .
- “Denial of women's rights cannot be a measure of the State's autonomy”.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Issues related to women empowerment had regularly figured in the past examinations. Therefore the topic assumes great importance for Mains examination. Some of the previous year questions will help you in understanding the importance of this topic. Visit our [IAS preparation page](#) to know the questions.

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Sex offender registries

Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi proposed setting up a national sex offender registry. An examination of these registries shows that these registries fail to reduce crimes.

Mains : GS 1 Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.

What is Sex offender registry?

- It is a registry with details about offenders convicted in sexual offences which is accessible to the public
- They have been operational in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and a few other English-speaking countries for more than a decade.

What does it contain?

It contains various details about the offender such as place of residence, employment, physical description etc.

What is the need of such registries?

It gives a sense of security to parents and residents since the community is aware of the presence of offenders.

What are the problems associated with the proposal?

- The Minister has proposed to include even the names of juveniles and persons standing on trial for sexual offences to be on the register which ignores basic consideration for civil rights of the accused.
- The registries result in severe hardship for former convicts, it has the effect of stigmatising them for life.

Why registries is not a good idea?

- Empirical evidence suggests that these registries fails to reduce crimes.
- There are a large number of cases registered under Protection of Children From Sexual Offences Act, 2012 which were instigated by objecting parents when the sexual intercourse was consensual.
- In the background of weak investigative and institutional machinery these sex offenders registries simply don't work
- Dismal conviction rate and huge pendency rate in rape cases points out that national sex registry may not be the solution to increasing sexual offences cases.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

In the background of weak investigative and institutional machinery the proposal to form a sex offenders registry may not be a solution to deter sexual offences. Discuss

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Planning for the people - urban planning in India

The issues associated with the urban planning process in India

Mains : GS 1 urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Constitutional provisions regarding Urban Local Bodies

- The 74th Constitutional Amendment sought to empower urban local governments to enable them to function as “institutions of self-government”,
- Urban planning, regulation of land use, and planning for economic and social development are functions listed under the 12th Schedule of the Constitution
- For metropolitan cities with a population of over 10 lakh, the 74th Amendment mandates the creation of Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) which will integrate the plans prepared by local bodies within the metropolitan area.
- For every city with a population of over three lakh, the Constitution also mandates the setting up of Ward Committees to carry out municipal functions within the ward.

Issues associated with the urban planning

Absence of local bodies in planning

- Local self government institutions have little influence over urban planning
- The local self government institutions are not yet fully functional in most cities.
- Legislations governing urban planning has failed to ensure that local bodies are made part of urban planning process.
- In several instances instead of public participation in planning process, merely public comments are invited to an already prepared plan.
- Planning constitute a top down bureaucratic approach.

Static master plans

- The present urban planning regime is based on outmoded practice of static, land use based master plans.
- Plan lacks a holistic approach. The purpose of a plan is just restricted to demarcating areas for industrial, commercial, agricultural etc..

Transportation, water supply, energy networks etc are missing components while planning

- The non- statutory nature of plan.

Involvement of multiple agencies

- Different sectoral plans are difficult to implement as each sector functions under different agencies.

The way forward

- Urban planning should include local bodies as apart of it.
- Follow a **bottom up approach** keeping in the mind of people’s aspirations.
- **Form new institutional mechanism** for intersectoral coordination and implementation of plan.
- a provision for periodic review of plans.
- The plan should be dynamic to accommodate various needs that may arise from

time to time.

Mains Perspective

Similar Questions

1. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the Smart City Programme. **[UPSC Mains 2016]**
2. Discuss the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanization in India. **[UPSC Mains 2013]**

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

GS 2 Indian Polity and International Relations

The temptation to go viral- The Good Samaritan law

The good Samaritan law has not created much confidence in the people to help road accident victims

Mains : GS 2 Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

What is The Good Samaritan law?

A law was enacted to protect people who help accident victims as several people are reluctant to help accident victims fearing legal consequences .

Why people are reluctant to help accident victims?

1. Apprehension about legal consequences
2. The behaviour of a crowd always discourage any helping intentions of an individual, “*any crowd discourages individuality*”.

What needs to be done?

1. A law that attempts to induce change must be complemented by efforts from the agency[in this case the police]
2. Reforms in system of investigation to do away the apprehensions of the general public.
3. Finally **behavioural change** in the society is primary for any legislation to be successful .
4. Behavioural change is a mandate in any social reform program. Take for instance ‘Swatch Bharath Program’ and ‘ Namami Ganga Project’. Manifold spending alone may not produce the desired result , the spending should go hand in hand with people participation for the program to be successful.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Be the change you want to see in others- Gandhiji. **[UPSC Essay 2013]**

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Necessary limit - Capping the prices of coronary stents by NPPA

Capping the prices of coronary stents by NPPA was an extreme measure. It should be followed by **more initiatives to make healthcare affordable for all citizens.**

Mains : GS 2 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA),

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), is an independent body of experts under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, constituted inter alia, to fix/revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of the medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995

Drug Prices Control order

The prices of drugs that figure in national list of essential medicines are controlled by the government. These price limits are given effect by passing the order referred to as DPCO.

Under the provisions of DPCO 2013, the prices of drugs that figure in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) are monitored and controlled by the regulator, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority.

Health care costs in India

- The dominance of for-profit institutions has increased the cost of treatments, created asymmetry among citizens.
- Nearly two-thirds of the high out-of-pocket expenditure on health went towards drugs
- Irrational use of medical technologies, including cardiac stents and knee implants.

How price regulation will help?

- Makes health care costs cheaper.
- Reduce incentive for unethical hospitals to use them needlessly.

What needs to be done?

1. Center should monitor expenditures jointly in partnership with the community and use regulation when needed.
2. Expand availability of medical technologies and provide uniform treatments in District hospitals
3. Raise public spending on health and strengthen the public health system

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Recently government has capped the stent prices bringing respite to heart patients, but whether the government will be able to effectively monitor the practices of the hospitals exploiting patients is another matter. Comment and give your suggestions.

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Ageing with dignity - Problems faced by the elderly in India

An increase in number of old people is a cause of deep concern among policymakers.

Mains : GS 3 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Elderly population in India

India is home to the world's second largest population of the elderly (people above 60 years of age).

By 2050 20% of Indian population will be above 60 years

Problems faced by the elderly in India

- Abandonment by their families.
- Destitution and homelessness.
- Inability to access quality health care.
- Low levels of institutional support
- Loneliness and depression associated with separation from families

Challenges due to growing population of elderly in India.

- Socio- economic pressures
- Increased demand for healthcare services and old age homes
- Shifting of disease patterns from communicable to non-communicable diseases
- The younger generation within the workforce being left with lesser time and migrating abroad senior citizens have to turn towards alternative arrangements
- Though a variety of retirement communities have emerged across the country in private sector the poor among the elderly are much dependent on the government

What needs to be done?

- Provide universal or widely accessible health insurance
- Establish networks of nursing homes and palliative care units
- Campaigns to redirect social attitudes towards ageing.

Presently different ministries run different schemes for the welfare of senior citizens in India such as exemptions in Income tax, health facilities, lesser fare in Railways, Old age pensions.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

While we flout India's demographic dividend we are forgetting the fact that India is home to the second largest population of elderly in the world. We may be a young nation, but we need to gear up to meet the needs of the elderly. Discuss

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Basic income and mental health gains - Issues faced by mentally ill patients in India

The issues faced by mentally ill patients in India and interventions that could change it.

Mains : GS 2 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Mental health condition in India- Quick Glance

- Approximately 150 million people in India experience one or the other mental health condition.
- Treatment points are limited.
- Depression and anxiety are twice as prevalent among women than men, and inordinately high among the poor.
- Patriarchal society, ills of dowry, intimate partner violence... contribute to bad mental health condition of women.
- India's suicide rates rank among the highest globally

Policy measures

- Focus on mental health is neglected.
- Large allocations are assigned towards upgradation of premium institutes which leave scarce resourced to address challenges in mental hospitals

The way forward

- Early identification and appropriate care model should be implemented
- Unconditional cash transfers as stress-reducing, equity-promoting intervention for those among the 150 million in need of financial recourse.
- Improvement of health care facilities especially in local hospitals
- Improvement in Education facilities
- Finally the bi-directional influence between mental ill health and poverty is clear as is the need to make meaningful investments and pursue inclusive development.

Mains Perspective

Model questions **[UPSC Mains 2015]**

Public health system has limitation in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that private sector can help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives do you suggest?

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Protecting the rights of tribals - bilateral investment treaties and tribals

India's bilateral investment treaties has no clause protecting the rights of tribals

Mains : GS 2 Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Various laws enacted to protect tribals

- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), recognises indigenous peoples' rights to which India is a party.
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention recognises their “right to land and natural resources and to define their own priorities for development.”
- The Constitution provides autonomy to tribal areas in matters of governance under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules
- The Forest Rights Act, 2006 protects the individual and community rights of tribal people in forest areas.

Issues faced by tribals

- Domestic and foreign investors sign contract with state governments for developmental projects which affects tribal rights.
- The foreign investors are protected under Bilateral Investment treaties and cancellation of project owing to tribal protest will lead to India being dragged into International courts under BIT's signed. The perceived threat of state being dragged into international courts refrains government from protecting tribal rights

Reasons for the serious impact that foreign investments have on the rights of indigenous people

1. Failure to adequately address human rights issues of tribal people in BITs. None of BITs signed by India contains provision on the rights of tribals.
2. The perceived threat of investment treaty arbitration (ITA) for enforcement of investor protection
3. Exclusion of indigenous people from the policymaking process.

What needs to be done?

1. Include provisions relating to the protection of indigenous people in BITs. The time is ripe for this since India is going to renegotiate its existing BITs.
2. Implementation of domestic legislations for the protection of the rights of tribals
3. Tribal people should be given representation even in investment policymaking.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

As far as possible, tribal people should be given representation even in investment policymaking. Comment

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

GS 2 International Relations

A new dawn in Indo-Bangla relations

The resolution of the long-pending land boundary agreement between India and Bangladesh is a good start towards rekindling cross-border ties

Mains : GS 2 India and its neighborhood- relations.

India Bangladesh relations



India played a major role in Bangladesh's independence

With the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1972, the two countries attempted to improve their relations to no avail.

Recent developments

Land Boundary agreement

- The LBA between India and Bangladesh was ratified in 2015, paving the way for solving border demarcation issue
- Since Independence several attempts were made to resolve the border demarcation issue with Pakistan (later Bangladesh). Since transfer of territories required constitutional amendment the move was opposed in Parliament. Also transfer of land was opposed by state governments.

Unresolved issues

- The sharing of river water between the two countries still remains contentious.
- Frequent killing of Bangladeshi nationals (often mistaken as smugglers and criminals) at the border by Indian Border Security Force
- **Public discontentment** in Bangladesh over India's policy which includes market access by Indian energy companies, the erecting of borders on zero point, the unresolved and unimplemented Teesta treaty, and the lack of market access for Bangladeshi companies and TV channels.

The way forward

- If Bangladesh-India relations are to truly succeed, India must seek to win the hearts and minds of the Bangladeshi people and seek out ways to squash their perception of being an unfriendly neighbour.
- Political will, along with mutually-beneficial exchanges, are the components for a sustainable Bangladesh-India alliance.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

India and its neighborhood- relations is a topic which is of great importance in Mains examination. Every year questions were asked based on this topic. Visit our IAS preparation page to know more

Sources: [The Hindu Businessline](#)

Speak in our own voice -India China relations and other World Powers

Indian should be free from external influences while dealing with China

Mains : GS 2 India and its neighborhood- relations.

Conflicts between India and China

1. Land front : Border issues with China. China claims that Arunachal Pradesh is part of its territory
2. Maritime Front : South China Sea dispute. U. S and its allies want India to take part in joint patrols to contain China's naval ambitions

3. India's neighbourhood : Chinese investment and increasing influence in India's neighbourhood especially with regard to Pakistan
4. Tibetan issue

What is the stand of World powers with respect to India China relations?

- U. S diplomats had visited Arunachal Pradesh and asserted that it is an integral part of India.
- Australian and Japanese experts are articulating the idea of forming a strategic “middle power coalition” of four countries.(India, U.S.A, Australia, Japan)

Why India should have its own say when it comes to Chinese issue?

- The middle power coalition advocated by the experts is not a good option as India is not a treaty ally of U.S.A like Australia and Japan are.
- The world powers though could help India in its maritime issue with China, on other issues they could hardly help.
- The uncertainty surrounding the Trump Administration in U.S.A

Conclusion

- India should not let others speak for India
- Despite lows of the past year over issues such as NSG, India should keep bilateral talks at steady level.

Also Read : [India – China Relations – Infographics 2017](#)

Mains Perspective

Model questions

India and its neighborhood- relations is a very important topic for civil services examination. Questions are sure to figure from this part of the syllabus. To see the question related to India and neighbourhood relations please visit our [IAS preparation page](#)

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Seeing the light -India U. S dispute in WTO

The WTO dispute that India lost over solar power and the one that it has now filed against the U.S. are similar. It is best for both countries to find an amicable solution

Mains : GS 2 Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Indian USA Dispute over solar power

- India's Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) required that 20 gigawatt (GW) of solar power should be generated from domestically produced modules or solar cells. This has been decreased following initiation of WTO proceedings
- The U.S government filed a complaint in WTO alleging that the domestic content requirement under JNNSM violated WTO norms

- The WTO ruling upheld US argument.
- The Indian government decided to file many cases against the U.S. because eight states in U.S had domestic content requirements in the renewable energy sector. The case filed by India is similar to the one filed by U.S against India

The way forward

- An amicable solution to the dispute without involving the WTO panel is unlikely to come about with the new Trump administration and its America First policy.
- The dispute could affect India - U.S relations
- It would be in the best interest of both nations to settle it amicably.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

The WTO dispute that India lost over solar power and the one that it has now filed against the U.S. are similar. It is best for both countries to find an amicable solution.

Discuss

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

GS 3 Indian Economy

Tax and transparency - Increased discretionary powers to tax officers

The editorial deals with the problems associated with the proposals in the budget which is aimed at increased discretionary powers of Tax officers.

Mains : GS 3 Government Budgeting.mobilization of resources

The issue

Budget proposed an increase in discretionary power of tax officers with reduced accountability

Major three proposed changes

1. Now raids can be conducted and reasons for conducting the same need to be disclosed to the courts only
2. The provision is applicable retrospectively from 1962 onwards.
3. Income tax officers have been allowed to re-open the books of an assessee going back 10 years as against the present six years, on suspicion of undisclosed assets worth over ₹ 50 lakh.

What are problems with these proposed changes?

The changes are good had the department has not been corrupt, but records prove otherwise

The way forward

1. As the Tax Administration Reforms Commission has suggested, non-invasive methods such as surveys of business clusters and mining of industrial and other public databases should first be attempted to identify non-filers of returns.
2. The Centre must ensure that the powers are used judiciously - Raids should be

conducted only in the rarest cases

Mains Perspective

Model questions

With greater power comes greater responsibility. *[UPSC Mains Essay 2014]*

Sources: [The Hindu Businessline](#)

Welcome push to rural India's aspirations - Budget and rural India

This article deals with initiatives proposed by the government in the budget for rural areas.

Mains : GS 3 Government Budgeting.

Highlights

- Budget has increased allocations for infrastructure and rural development. The total allocation for rural, agri and allied sectors has increased 24 per cent over the previous year.
- Housing sector has been given higher allocations.
- **Irrigation** : Increased allocation for Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF), along with a separate allocation to push the micro irrigation agenda.
- **Crop Insurance** : On the crop insurance front, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been provided an enhanced allocation
- **Livestocks**: Livestock got a boost with the proposal for a Dairy Processing Infrastructure Fund of ₹ 2,000 crore which would grow to Rs.8,000 crore in three years.
- **Soil Health** : The proposal to create minilabs for soil testing continues the existing thrust on Soil Health Cards.
- **e-NAM** : Another 335 e-NAMs will be added to the 250 created this year. The Budget seeks to integrate e-NAMs with commodity exchanges and enact a model law on contract farming.
- **Essential commodities act** : Denotification of perishables from the Essential Commodities Act has been proposed in the budget.
- **Skill development** : Important proposals for skill building, developing over 600 district Prime Minister's Kaushal Kendras, India International Skill Kendras and SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood promotion Programme) .
- **Agri Credit** : farm credit target for 2017-18 is a huge sum of Rs.10-lakh crore.
- Funds have been allocated to bring digital banking to Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies, the lowest tier of India's rural cooperative credit structure. This will, for the first time ever, bring new generation banking services to small and marginalised farmers who are members of these cooperative societies.

Sources: [The Hindu Businessline](#)

A bankable idea

The idea of creating a bad bank for resolving the NPA crisis.

Mains : GS 3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

NPA crisis

- The gross non-performing assets of banks reached 9 per cent of bank lending or 4.5 per cent of the GDP
- The mounting NPA has decreased the capacity of banks to lend and decreased investment by the indebted

Efforts to solve this crisis

RBI has explored various options such as 5/25 scheme, strategic debt restructuring and S4A (or Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets) and private asset reconstruction companies to solve the bad loan menace with little results

The idea of bad bank - Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA)

Bad Bank : *A bank set up to buy the bad loans of a bank with significant non performing assets at market price. By transferring the bad assets of an institution to the bad bank, the banks clear their balance sheet of toxic assets but would be forced to take write downs.*

Economic Survey has mooted the idea of a 'bad bank', the Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA), with 49 per cent government ownership to solve the NPA crisis.

How does Bad Bank help?

PARA is expected to clean up the balance sheets of banks, leaving them free to lend

The issues with present Bad banks/ ARCs.

- Private ARCs, have not picked up more than 4-5 per cent of the book value of the NPAs.
- This is because public sector banks, on the one hand, are not willing to write down losses to the extent that the ARCs would like, fearing vigilance repercussions, while on the other the ARCs cannot offer more when asset "resolution" is difficult.

The way forward

- How PARA will be successful in dealing with Badloans where other ARC's have failed needs to be seen.
- While PARA, as a government-owned entity, may be able to bring various creditors on board to agree on write-downs, it would also have to show urgency in recovering the monies.
- Even with the bankruptcy code coming into play, enabling the judiciary to put an end to protracted liquidation proceedings, PARA must be guided by an approach to revive industry wherever possible.

Prelims Perspective

A bad bank sometimes seen in news is

- a. a bank with more than 10 percent of its assets classified as NPA
- b. a public sector agency that specializes in debt recovery
- c. a bank set up to buy the bad loans of a bank
- d. a bank that is on the verge of collapse

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Resolution of bad loans and restoring the health of PSBs is among the biggest challenges the economy faces today. It's a challenge that requires a response on multiple fronts. A bad bank cannot be the sole response for it. Evaluate the merits and demerits with the proposal to set up a bad bank for resolving the NPA crisis

Sources: [The Hindu Businessline](#) [Investopedia](#)

Food processing sector in India

Indian food processing sector has the potential to attract USD 33 billion of investment and create nine million jobs by FY 2024, revealed an ASSOCHAM-Grant Thornton Research paper.

Mains : GS 3 Food processing and related industries in India- scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.

Highlights of the study

By 2024, food processing sector is expected to employ nine million people in India and expected to generate about 8,000 direct and 80,000 indirect jobs.

Why India should focus on Food Processing sector?

- Food processing sector is a key contributor to employment generation and it is a key sector in encouraging labour movement from agriculture to manufacturing in India.
- Demand for processed food is rising with growing disposable income, urbanisation, young population and nuclear families.
- Household consumption is expected to double by 2020.
- Changing lifestyle of people has facilitated an increase in expenditure on nutritional foods.
- India has the second largest arable land in the world, is the largest producer of milk, pulses, sugarcane and tea and the second largest producer of wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables.
- India is the world's second largest producer of food after China.
- India has a strong raw material base for the food processing industry.
- India benefits from large agriculture sector, abundant livestock and cost competitiveness.
- Diverse agro-climatic conditions encourage cultivation of different crop

Stats of Food processing Industry in India

- Indian food processing industry is pegged close to USD 130 billion.
- The share of food processing exports in total exports was around 12 percent in the last few years.
- During FY 2011-15, India's exports of processed food related products have been growing at a CAGR of 23.3 percent.
- The unorganised sector accounts for 42 percent of India's food processing industry.

Challenges

- Despite the massive production, the degree of processing is low.
- Investment in Infrastructure is necessary for the development of food processing industry

Mains Perspective

Model questions [*UPSC Mains 2016*]

What are the impediments in marketing and supply chain management in developing the food processing industry in India? Can e-commerce help in overcoming these bottlenecks?

Sources: Business Standard

GS 3 Environment and Ecology

Solar power breaks a price barrier

India's National policy on Renewables is failing to tap the investment potential of the middle class

Mains : GS 3 Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Background

- India has set an ambitious target of generating 100 gigawatts of solar energy by 2022.
- Recently the auctioned price for solar photovoltaic (SPV) power reached least in Madhya Pradesh.

Lacuna in the national policy on renewables

- A glaring lacuna in the national policy on renewables is the failure to tap the investment potential of the middle class.
- While large scale grid connected renewables received maximum attention, progress of rooftop solar lagged behind
- For India to achieve its ambitious target it is necessary that participation and investment by the buildings sector, both residential and commercial are needed

The way forward

- Policy initiatives promoting average consumer to invest in rooftop solar installations

- The experience of Germany, where robust solar expansion has been taking place over the years, illustrates the benefits of policy guarantees for rooftop installations and feed-in tariffs lasting 20 years.
- State electricity should introduce net-metering systems with a feed-in tariff that is designed to encourage the average consumer to invest in PV modules, taking grid electricity prices into account.

What is Net metering policy?

- Net metering is a new concept where an instrument which has a special metering and billing agreement between utilities and their customers, facilitates the connection of small, renewable energy-generating systems to the power grid.
- Net metering policy is being developed to encourage small scale renewable energy systems.

How does it work?

When a net metering client's renewable generator (in this case solar power) is producing more power than is being consumed, the electric meter runs backward generating credits. Whenever the net metering customer uses more power than is being produced, the meter runs forward normally. Net metering customers are charged only for the net power that they consume from the electricity service provider that has accumulated over a specific period.

Prelims perspective

Model questions

'Net metering' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of promoting the

- (a) production and use of solar energy by the households/consumers
- (b) use of piped natural gas in the kitchens of households
- (c) installation of CNG kits in motor-cars
- (d) installation of water meters in urban households

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Give an account of the current status and targets to be achieved pertaining to renewable energy sources in the country. Discuss in brief the importance of National Programme on Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs). *[UPSC Mains 2016]*

Sources: [The Hindu](#) [MNRE](#)

The ecological balance-sheet

Inadequate budgetary allocation, underutilisation of allocated fund, lack of holistic approach towards environmental issues in the budget are dealt in the article

Mains : GS 3 Government Budgeting, Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Lack of holistic approach

- The budgetary adopted a fragmented approach to environmental problems.

- The issues of forest management, resource conservation, pollution control and wildlife protection though are interconnected are treated in isolation with attention paid only at the macro-level.
- The proactive measures for environmental conservation are disproportionately counterbalanced by lax regulation in other sectors such as energy and large industries.
- Dedication funds for the Environment Ministry without corresponding measures to boost alternative energy sources, policy measures to reduce pollution and adoption of sustainable development practices is a meaningless exercise
- For instance while there has been an increase in allocation to the MoEFCC, funding for renewable energy forms, solar use in rural areas, etc. has been reduced.

Meagre budgetary allocation

- The budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Environment under various heads is inadequate. The ambitious projects like Project Tiger saw its budget slashed by ₹ 30 crore and Project Elephant received only a marginal boost of ₹ 2.5 crore.

Under-utilisation of funds

- Funds allocated to several schemes remain underutilised.
- The expenditure budget for the MoEFCC reveals that under the Centrally sponsored schemes, transfers made to the States and the Union Territories remain grossly under-utilised. For instance, Project Tiger has barely managed to utilise half the funds allocated to it. The spectre of under-utilisation haunts State projects as well.

The way forward

- Scientific, sustained and intensive measures of conservation are required moving forward.
- Environmental issues cannot be treated in isolation and it requires a holistic approach for the efforts to conserve it become fruitful.
- A small step in this regard would be to acknowledge the role of the environment in budgetary allocations and ensure rational dedication of funds.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Several efforts aimed conserving environment adopts a fragmented and isolated approach. Only the adoption of a holistic approach will be fruitful in resolving the present environmental crisis. Discuss

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Smoke on the water - Editorial

The fire that occurred in a lake in Bengaluru is symbol of degrading wetlands in India. The threats faced by wetlands are highlighted in the article

Mains : GS 3 Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Stats of lost wetlands

- Bengaluru has lost an estimated 79% of water bodies and 80% of its tree cover from the baseline year of 1973.
- 38% of wetlands had already been lost nationally and in some cases the loss is even upto 88%

Threats faced by the wetlands

- Encroachment of lake beds and catchment areas for commercial exploitation.
- Pollution caused by sewage, industrial effluents and garbage

How loss of wetlands affect human beings?

- The concentration of heavy metals in wetlands will contribute to bioaccumulation
- Wetlands perform important ecological functions such as Water purification, flood control

What needs to be done?

- Identification and demarcation of wetlands using digital and physical mapping
- Entrusting the task of monitoring encroachments to communities
- Restoration works, removal of land grabbers.
- Every city need a single lake protection authority. Multiple disjointed agencies achieve little collectively.

Prelims perspective

Similar Question [UPSC Prelims 2014]

If a wetland of international importance is brought under the 'Montreux Record', what does it imply?

- a) Changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur in the wetland as a result of human interference.
- b) The country in which the wetland is located should enact a law to prohibit any human activity within five kilometres from the edge of the wetland
- c) The survival of the wetland depends on the cultural practices and traditions of certain communities living in its vicinity and therefore the cultural diversity therein should not be destroyed
- d) It is given the status of 'World Heritage Site

Mains Perspective

Model questions

Destruction of wetlands is causing enormous damage to the environment. Discuss the reasons behind the loss of wetlands and give your suggestions on how to preserve wetlands.

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

Shining bright Increasing solar power Capacity in India

What all things need to be done to increase India's solar power capacity and why India should increase solar power capacity.

Mains : GS 3 Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Recently the government has decided to double the capacity of solar power installed.

Why Solar Energy?

- It will help India meet the commitment to keep carbon emissions in check under the Paris Agreement.
- India has set a goal of creating 100GW solar power by 2022
- It can help in creating additional employment. (jobs in solar energy have witnessed the fastest growth since 2011 among various renewable energy sectors Asia being the biggest beneficiary)
- Renewables and new energy storage technologies are becoming cheaper alternative to traditional fossil fuel-based sources of power.

What needs to be done?

- Measures to scale up generating capacity.
- Competitive manufacturing of the full chain of photovoltaics.
- Open training facilities to produce the human resources the industry will need.
- Powering public facilities such as railway stations and stadia using solar power
- Policy measures encouraging adoption of rooftop solar system.
- **Financing** : Low cost financing and new financing options such as green bonds are necessary to achieve ambitious targets.
- **Tariffs** : Electricity regulators should fix tariffs taking into account the cost of project, breakeven period and life of a project.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

To what factors can the recent dramatic fall in equipment costs and tariff of solar energy be attributed? What implications does the trend have for the thermal power producers and the related industry? *[UPSC Mains 2016]*

Sources: [The Hindu](http://www.thehindu.com)

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GS 3 Science and Technology

Working on the ISRO principle

The success of ISRO demonstrates that it is possible to create high-performing public sector organisations. A look at the reasons behind the success of ISRO.

Mains : GS 3 Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Why ISRO has performed far better when compared to other government agencies?

1. **Autonomy** : ISRO reports to Prime Minister's office rather than to a ministry. The influence of ministers and bureaucrats supervising an agency is absent in the case of ISRO. The Prime Minister's office rarely have the time to supervise an organisation.
2. **Location** : The geographical location of the organisation also matters in terms of creating an appropriate ecosystem to nurture excellence. ISRO's headquarters is located in Bengaluru unlike most of the government agencies whose headquarters are located in Delhi or in other places of political salience. Being located in Delhi will leave an organisation vulnerable to bureaucratic hurdles and ministries decisions. ISRO by virtue of being located in the Science and Technology hub of India helps in attracting better talent.
3. **Human Capital** : Unlike other government agencies staffed by generalists ISRO is staffed by specialists right from its technocratic top management.
4. **Cooperation with private sector** : ISRO also extends more cooperation to private sector than any other government agencies does. The building blocks of many of ISRO's successes come from outside the government system.

What Indian should learn from ISRO?

The creation of high performing government bodies requires starting from scratch and focussing on a few basics:

1. Real autonomy from ministries.
2. Right geographical location/appropriate ecosystem.
3. A team of specialists,
4. Partnership with the private sector and operating only in spheres where there is no alternative to government.

The creation of a handful of such agencies could have a transformative effect.

Conclusion

The conventional view is that the government is poor in project execution and if one looks at the state of infrastructure or of the quality of public services that is not an unreasonable conclusion to reach. What ISRO shows is that it is possible, indeed

feasible, for the government to build high-performing organisations/agencies. This is not an argument for a big government. Instead, it is an argument for building top quality institutions in a limited number of areas where the government's role cannot be substituted by the private sector.

Mains Perspective

Model questions [*UPSC Mains 2016*]

Discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology. How the application of this technology has helped India in its socio-economic development?

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

GS 3 Security challenges

The IS challenge

The challenges faced by India due to terrorism, influence of Islamic state, and the things that need to be done.

Mains : GS 3 Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, Linkages of organized crime with terrorism

The arrest of two suspected Islamic State associates and the killing of an Indian citizen who joined IS shows that the IS is gaining some influence in India.

Threats faced by India

- Influence of IS on youth in India.
- Several youth have been arrested from different parts of India by anti-terror officials
- Though the number of Indians who joined the ranks of Islamic state is low comparatively the lone wolf attacks pose security risks
- The recent attacks the Islamic State has carried out in India's neighbouring countries in South Asia should worry India.

Mode of operation of IS and its influence

- Islamic State thrives on support from foreign jihadists
- Unlike other terrorist groups IS is not recruiting people from local communities but instead relies on online propaganda.
- It encourages sympathisers to reach its strongholds to join the war or carryout lone wolf attacks in their own country

What needs to be done

- High-level intelligence, counter-terror operations should be continued.
- Better coordination between the state and Muslim religious leaders in countering radicalisation
- Having in place specific de-radicalisation programmes
- It is important to not let these isolated arrests be blown out of proportion to

target the larger Muslim population, which right-wing elements often try to do.

Mains Perspective

Model questions

1. “Terrorism is emerging as a competitive industry over the last few decades”
Analyze the above statement **[UPSC Mains 2016]**
2. Use of Internet and social media by non state actors for subversive activities is a major security concern. How have these been misused in the recent past? Suggest effective guidelines to curb the above threat. **[UPSC Mains 2016]**
3. In the Indian context , Both human intelligence and technical intelligence are crucial in combating terrorism **[UPSC Mains Essay 2011]**

Sources: [The Hindu](#)

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