

NOVEMBER – 2015

Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism

5) Recently it was suggested that India follow the U.K. model and set up a separate unit on the lines of Research Information and Communication Unit (RICU) of the U.K. to tackle violent extremists. Discuss the model and its applicability for India. (200 Words)

Growing Islamic fundamentalism, extremism and terror activities on a global scale and at a rapid pace, challenge the security settings of many countries like India which are prone to future threats. There are reports saying that ISIS is extending its arms particularly to South Asia and South East Asia by attracting youth and unemployed sections of the society and recruiting them for ranks. In order to counter this growing menace, different countries laid different paths.

Recently, the U.K government established a dedicated agency Research Information and Communication Unit (RCIU) to keep constant and consistent surveillance on the terrorist organisations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, and to check the growing tendencies in the youth to join terrorist organisations in passion of adventure and for monetary benefits. There are many reports that the youth, especially from European countries, are joining terror ranks.

Experts believe that India must also follow U.K model and set up a dedicated agency for controlling terrorism. In fact, India has already prepared a blueprint of government's strategy and submitted to all governments. This blueprint is based on the models of successful States like Maharashtra and Telangana who has played attentive role in monitoring and analysing terror activities and countered the propagation of terror agenda, extremist ideologies; and prevented many youths to join in these terror organisations. However, the intelligence wings and the cyber police had requested the government to access encrypted data for high level of vigilance and fool proof mechanisms in defending the security of the nation. This may have different anomalies, but will give upper hand to the Police.

It may also be necessary, even in India, to dedicate a wing exclusively for dealing with terror activities. This will also enhance accountability, especially when sensitive information is transferred to it. Moreover, terrorist organisations are changing their strategies and following different approaches. For example, recruited youth are identifying foreigners in the country and extorting them for funds and other support. Therefore, in order to be up-to-date on these type of actions, dedicated agencies play a crucial role, as evidenced in anti-naxal squad etc.

Topic: Indian economy – employment

6) “Insufficient opportunities for youth to earn incomes commensurate with their aspirations is the root cause of social atrophy, degenerating into violence in many parts of the country, including Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, and in Indian cities everywhere.” Do you think conventional methods of job creation have worked in favour of India’s youth? From where should jobs come? Discuss. (200 Words)

India’s exploding population along with technological advancements which is replacing human hands by inclusion of machines has created great apprehensions in the minds of policy makers i.e. to create new job opportunities.

Since India is in third stage of demographic transition, with large population ageing between 25 to 59 years, it is important that old-fashioned policy solutions to create jobs and generate skills must be transformed according to the needs of the current requirements.

--- Skill development programme must be integrated with education system itself, so that extra years are not wasted in learning adequate skills after completion of education.

--- Due to interventions of technology, especially dot-com bubble, new business process must try to harness this new platform by going from ‘bricks and mortar’ to online retailing, so as to make their products competitive. It is also important that government encourage youth by imparting Entrepreneur skills and credit support to innovative business processes.

--- As India contains large number of skilled and unskilled workers it is important government give greater impetus to their FDI policies.

--- Working environment must also be made pro-worker, i.e. they must be treated as human beings with aspirations, feelings and abilities to learn, rather than mere low-cost labour. This has been biggest reason that best minds move to different countries.

Thus to harness Demographic dividend's full potential and to gain competitive advantage of industries it is essential to keep on igniting the spark of growth by providing proper training programmes, better legal frameworks and new platforms to make them more competitive.

Topic: Energy; Resource mobilization

7) Which factors decide the price fluctuation in global oil prices? If oil prices drop low, how should India make use of the 'opportunity'? Examine. (200 Words)

The factors affecting the price of global prices are as follows:

-OPEC Roles:

The policy adopted by major oil exporting countries in matters of production supply or cut is an important factor defining the oil prices.

- Alternative fuel discovery:

The shale gas revolution in US has given a blow to the global demand of crude petroleum oil .

-Global growth:

The slowdown or recovery of economy of oil importing countries too affect the prices. The recent slowdown in oil prices is result of subprime crisis, eurozone crisis and china slowdown.

-Geopolitics:

In a bid to prevent the growth of Iran following successful nuclear deal with US and affect growth of Russia, the opec nations are reluctant to cut oil production leading to its price slump.

India importing 80% of its oil demand must xapitalise the situation as it has multiplier effect on its economy.

- Current account deficit would improve giving positive signals to domestic and foreign investors
 - Control inflation and so prices of goods and services would come down which would further propel her growth.
 - An important opportunity to develop Strategic petroleum reserve to ward off future contingency.
 - The fiscal deficit would lessen and help in reaching FRBM targets. Also, less stress on oil marketing companies of India which mostly depends on oil bonds.
- A strong political and bureaucratic will would insure proper capitalisation of opportunity given by decline in oil prices.

Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

5) It is argued that Social entrepreneurs are a key stakeholder segment to engage in delivering basic services and opportunities efficiently and effectively to the underserved in India and help in inclusive growth. Examine why such an argument is made. (200 Words)

At times we have seen failure of growth being inclusive, and lack of provision for basic services for poor from government. One of the policies which can be employed by the government to address the above problem, is encouragement of social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs are enterprises which employ innovative, cost-efficient and technological enabled business models to provide basic services to the poor.

The social entrepreneur is a better model in delivering public services as :

- a) these organizations work at an impressive scale—serving millions of low-income households and transforming their quality of life.
- b) Able to create systems through which informal workers across India can have access to markets, technology and financial services and successfully influence government policy on their social and economic.

Despite the tremendous potential, there are certain area which improvement is needed:

a) Their effort fall short due to magnitude of social challenge in our country, which can be addressed through investing in best practice and replicating them in national scale

b) The policies of the government must draw the experience of social enterprise to make growth inclusive and through multi-prolonged intervention.

c) There must be greater involvement of corporate sector in this field, social enterprise create economic value, and fair and equitable society.

Given

the usefulness of social enterprise, the government must frame policies to encourage it.

Also refer,

<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2015/11/03/5-it-is-argued-that-social-entrepreneurs-are-a-key-stakeholder-segment-to-engage-in-delivering-basic-services-and-opportunities-efficiently-and-effectively-to-the-underserved-in-india-and-help-in-inc/#comment-2340355344>

Topic: Energy; S&T

6) It is said that the critical shortage of fissile material is the single greatest factor that is preventing the large-scale deployment of thorium-fuelled reactors in India. Discuss advantages of thorium based reactors, why they need fissile material, challenges that India faces in procuring this material and measures needed to overcome these challenges. (250 Words)

Thorium based reactors forms the final stage in India's 3-stage nuclear program. Though this peculiar 3-stage cycle incorporating thorium was designed keeping in view of India's resource profile, there are certain inherent advantages associated with thorium based reactors:

1)Waste reduction: Such reactors produce far less waste and have the ability to burn up highly radioactive and long-lasting minor actinides that can't be handled easily in case of Light Water Reactors

2)Toxicity reduced: The miniscule waste generated is toxic for only three or four hundred years rather than thousands of years

3)Cheap: Such reactors are cheap because of high burn up

4)Proliferation efforts: Thorium transmutes to Uranium-233 in the third stage but also contain substantial amount of Uranium-232 which emits strong gamma radiation and thus easily detectable

The thorium based reactors though working on thorium requires a fissile material because of the need to keep the chain reaction going and thus ensuring sustainability in electricity generation. Thorium is packed with fissile materials like Uranium or Plutonium to achieve these ends.

However, there are certain challenges for India to procure the fissile material:

1)Domestic constraints: India is not endowed well with reserves of Uranium or Plutonium

2)International constraints: India is not a signatory of Non-Proliferation treaty and has been kept out of Nuclear-Suppliers Group, which controls the trade in fissile material

The above mentioned challenges can be addressed through the following measures:

1)Utilizing US clout: India has signed Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal thus legitimizing herself as a proponent in the field of non-proliferation and thus can sign similar deals with other countries and also get an entry in NSG

2)Establishing safeguards: India can put her reactors under the purview of IAEA in order to ward off the concerns relating to proliferation of nuclear reactors and thus win the confidence of countries across the globe

Given the advantages of such reactors, India should quickly expedite the relevant measures through diplomatic means.

Topic: Subsidies.

7) Are there any 'wasteful subsidies' in India that do not actually reach the poor? Will reducing them help the poor? Critically examine. (200 Words)

Government invest huge amount of money in subsidies which comes from hard working tax paying individuals. 14th finance commission of India recommended to cut down various inefficient subsidies which does not reach to the real beneficiaries and rather have become breeding ground for corruption.

- Kerosene subsidy is generally given to poor people to cook food but is now largely used in lamps and adulteration in petrol and diesel.

- Fertilizer subsidy is given to farmers but studies have found that it is largely benefit only rich farmers. This has become a real problem because of indiscriminate use of fertilizers.

- Subsidy duplication is also a major problem,

both centre and states have similar subsidies so, extra subsidy received by individual becomes wasteful and is sold in market.

Reducing subsidies directly can not help the poor because:

- Subsidies work as a safety net for poor, devoid

of it they can not survive.

- The World Bank and other studies show that

subsidies and other social programs can significantly decrease poverty.

- Many sectors simple can not sustain without

government subsidies like jute industry, handicraft and handloom industry and most importantly the agriculture industry.

Simply reducing subsidies will benefit none while mindful use, diversification and efficient delivery mechanism can strengthen micro and macro indicators of economy while also will reduce poverty significantly.

Topic: Agriculture issues; e-technology in the aid of farmers

8) Critically comment on the socio-political causes of moribund status of Indian agriculture. (200 Words)

Indian economy is agrarian economy with more than 50% of the population still dependent on agriculture but contribution of agriculture to GDP is around 17% only and our agricultural growth has hovered around 2-3% annually. In fact it should grow at least 4% to alleviate the rural poverty and distress of the farmers.

The various socio-political causes for this sorry state of agriculture are

SOCIAL CAUSES :

- 1) most of the Indian agricultural holdings are small and Indian farming is mainly subsistence type of farming.
- 2) most of the Indian farmers are illiterate and don't know the modern farming techniques and methods. Eg. Most of the farmers don't know proper irrigation practices and proper usages of fertilisers and pesticides
- 3) The fruits of Green revolution are confined to certain parts like Punjab and Haryana and to farmers with medium and large land holdings.
- 4) traditional mindset of the farmers. There are apprehensions about new technology and new crops eg. GM crops

POLITICAL CAUSES

- 1) our investment in agricultural R&D is less
- 2) most of political parties prefer loan waivers as sops to distressed farmers rather than creating sound credit facilities, forward and backward linkages to agriculture, agricultural insurance scheme etc.
- 3) failure to implement land reforms to the full extent
- 4) lack of proper coordination between various ministries dealing with agriculture. Eg. delays in conducting environment impact assessments for various technologies impede their application in agriculture

So a holistic approach should be devised to transform the Indian farmers into agricultural entrepreneurs and to boost the Indian agriculture. The various steps in this regard are more investment in R&D, decentralisation of R&D to suit to the local conditions, promoting cooperative farming, promoting coherence between various

ministries linked to agriculture, educating farmers regarding better farming practices etc. The recent government programmes like soil health card scheme, krishi sinchai yojana, krishi paramparagat yojana , bringing Green revolution to NE are laudable in this regard.

Topic: India's contribution to S&T.

5) Write a note on the IMPRINT Initiative of the government of India. (200 Words)

<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2015/11/05/5-write-a-note-on-the-imprint-initiative-of-the-government-of-india/#comment-2343962282>

Topic: Agriculture issues; e-technology in the aid of farmers; Investment models

6) Can agriculture still remain a primary engine of rural growth in India? Can public private partnership (PPP) mode be a game-changer for agriculture sector? Examine. (200 Words)

Agriculture, the most dominant activity in the rural India has begun to stagnate with time. However, the sector still remains a primary engine for growth in rural India because:

- 1)Agricultural sector employs the greatest proportion of people
- 2)Crop yields have not reached their maximum potential and with proper interventions, the sector can greatly contribute to rural India
- 3)Thrust has been placed on food processing industry and model Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee law has been rolled out having the potential to remove the existing bottlenecks in agriculture

However, the private sector has so far remain cold about making an entry in the agriculture sector and in this regard, PPP can be a game changer because of the following reasons:

- 1)Government should play the role of facilitator and enabler in order to allow quick set up of food processing industry through land acquisition

2) Private sector can bring the required technologies in order to deal with climate vagaries, pest attacks and untapped potential of crops while government can help in putting those technologies in use. E.g. attacks of whitefly on Bt Cotton in Punjab necessitates that alternative models be put in place

3) PPP can invest in cold-storage infrastructure, godowns and help in marketing of agricultural produce through setting up of retail shops in cities

4) PPP can also help through contract farming and direct farming. E.g. Fresh and Health Enterprise Limited under agriculture for procurement of apples from Shimla

Thus, the PPP can turn around the agriculture sector and come up with viable solution to deal with the existing bottlenecks.

Topic: Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

5) Online radicalisation of youth is said to be a great threat to both India's and world security. How one can stop such radicalisation without violating one's fundamental rights? What measures has India taken in this regard? Critically discuss. (200 Words)

Radicalization of youth has always remained a major threat to nations's sovereignty, security and integrity. But with the advent and increasing penetration of internet and social media the problem has got compounded .Its difficult to regulate social platforms due to their inherent advantages on one hand and greater anonymity, trans national reach on other.

Any step to regulate it should be in consonance and with utmost respect to fundamental rights of citizens to speech and expression, information , connection etc. Following steps can be taken:

1. International Cooperation : an international consensus should be built among nations and various IT related organizations to follow certain guidelines in regulating internet .
2. Comprehensive legislation : Strict law should be enacted to create deterrence for involving into any radicalization.

3. Empowered investigation and judicial process to bring to punish those involved in such steps.
4. Use of Technology : Technology like big data can be used to catch phrases related to radicalization and delete any such content.
5. To avoid children falling prey to radicalization, online sites can use similar method like youtube to verify the age of viewer before allowing to watch any adult video.
6. Parents, family and society needs to be more alert and aware in watching the activities of their children. They should not only monitor activities but counter the radical ideology with rational and logical thinking.

India has taken following steps:

1. IT Act 2000 (amended in 2008) empowers government to prevent and take strict actions against any anti-national activity including radicalization.
2. RAW, IB etc are keeping strict watch on activities online to find any citizen getting involved in radical actions.

But the steps taken by India are ineffective as radicalization esp. after ISIS birth has taken new heights. A multi pronged strategy focusing on rational and logical propaganda should be adopted with the help of civil society, NGOs etc. Also any kind of intrusion by investigation and intelligence agencies in the pretext of containing radicalization should not infringe on individual's privacy. Legal backing with safeguards should be provided.

Topic: Food processing

6) India is witnessing rapidly expanding food technology start-ups. Do you think they will help the food processing sector in India? Comment. (200 Words)

India is seeing a revolution with the emerging start-up's in various fields, owing much to the increased usage of smartphones and also "smart life" that people want to live. India's food processing start-up has seen a proliferation in the recent times.

The following are the ways they can help the industry and create a revolution:

- 1) People have got many other options to order quality food at competitive cost.
- 2) Indirect and direct employment hence generated has owing to the increase in related start up's.
- 3) Less bureaucracy within these start ups helps the employees work with more enthusiasm hence people can be assured of better quality of food.
- 4) Some startup's have allowed housewives to be a part of it hence in a way it paves the way to women empowerment.

However these food processing start up's have some problems to be looked at :

- 1) Quality of food : Most of the start-ups have been known to have a feedback mechanism but many don't care about them until the bucks keep coming.
- 2) Most of these start-ups have delivery options available in city areas, hence the people in rural areas don't have much options.
- 3) Increased competition has seen a rise in unethical means to surpass each other.
- 4) Angel investors are still an issue as most of the people who have genuine entrepreneurial skills don't find it easy to win the race.

The other problem associated with it is the local markets and restaurants that have to suffer. Efforts should be made so as to adhere to the Competition Act so that a level playing field is maintained and people on a whole can benefit from this emerging market.

Topic: Issues relating to intellectual property rights.

5) Define Geographical Indication (GI). Do you think in recent years in India, GIs are increasingly being seen as a totem of cultural pride, and not as measures to preserve products? Critically comment. (200 Words)

GI tag is a stamp that associates a traditional product/design with a particular region. eg Darjeeling Tea. GI serves two benefits

1. The customer is assured of the authenticity
2. The traditional industries, like those of handicraft, receive a boost

Issue

In recent times disputes have arisen over the question of which region the product has originated from. This is aggravated in the absence of incomplete historical facts. Eg, conflicts have arisen over the regional origin of the sweet dish Rosogullah. Both West Bengal and Odisha claim that the dish originated in their own states. By 'winning' a GI tag, each state is looking to promote their own culture over the other

Problem

1. It polarises the various communities in the country
2. Societies become more inward looking
3. Customers get no additional benefit, as long as they are assured of the quality

Way out

1. GI tag needs to be provided only after a thorough historical and factual inquiry
2. For controversial products, either none of the regions be provided with GI tag or both of them should be given it
3. The focus needs to shift from mere certification, and brownie points for culture, to active promotion of the crippled handicraft industry.

Topic: Agriculture issues

6) Analyse the imbalances in the use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture in Indian states and explain why three major plant nutrients, namely, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, are prescribed to be used in the ratio of 4:2:1. (200 Words)

Use of fertilizers has increased manifold since 1960s when Green Revolution was launched to create food security in the country.

Since India was facing huge food shortages it was being realised that the soil needs extra amount of "Macronutrients" like nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, magnesium etc. to increase its yields. Accordingly chemical fertilizers containing N, P, and K in the ratio of 4:2:1 was prescribed. Nitrogen was given higher emphasis as it is essential element to crops, especially to wheat, as compared to phosphorus and potassium.

On the other hand with their use for over four decades, there have been imbalances, which are:

--- Fertilizer subsidies are only utilized by large farmers and not reaped by small ones making them poorer.

--- Due to excessive use it has degraded the soil quality enormously and has also contaminated water bodies.

--- They are one of the main reasons for food contamination, affecting the health of the consumers.

--- They have also created disparity among states. States like Punjab and Haryana have benefited not others.

--- It was even observed that without proper assessment of the chemicals present in the soil fertilizers were used creating greater imbalance.

Despite, there was a lacuna in its implementation in 1960s, it is imperative that pragmatic steps must be involved through technological advancements, soil check-up, encouraging farmers to carry Organic farming, and use of bio-fertilizers. Schemes like Soil Health Card etc. are a positive move towards it.

Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies

7) As election promise, some states tend to provide free electricity to farmers. Do you think such measures help in increasing crop yield? What are the merits and demerits of this policy? Critically examine. (200 Words)

One of the important cases with regards to free electricity supply to farmers is the case of Andhra Pradesh in 2004. After a decade, various studies have shown that this policy didn't have any impact on the yield/productivity of the crops though the cropping areas has increased. This implies that productivity cannot be improved by tweaking one variable, it needs to be tackled at multiple fronts with respect to seeds, fertilizers, farming methods, tools, soil health and so on.

Merits of the policy:

1. It led to the increase in the cropping area and thus the overall production has improved.

2. It led to more savings by the farmers as the electricity charges have been saved.
3. These savings find their way into education, health and overall better rural demand and thus gives a fillip to rural economy.

Demerits;

1. Since electricity is free, water is drawn from ground in a non-judicious manner and it affects the ground water table.
2. It adds up a huge burden on the state exchequer.
3. More and more water guzzling crops are cultivated even if the agro-climatic conditions do not support them.
4. Less incentives to adopt water efficient crops and also less incentives to adopt new technologies in improving the yield as the increase in production suffices the needs of farmers.

Thus, free electricity supply to farmers has more negative affects. Such subsidies needs to be provided on things which takes care of sustainability also (E.g: Solar pumps)

Topic: Infrastructure – energy

3) It is said that in India, falling rates in solar power is good for consumers and policymakers, but not for investors. Examine why. (200 Words)

As the the country has immense need, potential and possibility of solar power and government is ambitious to develop it at gigantic scale (1,00,000 MW). When the economy of scale increases the prices of good and services naturally come down so is happening with the rate of solar power and delighting the policy makers of a energy hungry,rapidly developing country as a cheaper and environment friendly power source.

- 1.. This decreased price so far are mainly in bids, tenders and papers only and are susceptible to increase in future at the time of real delivery by using escalations by the developers and the real benefit will not go to consumers and the move can be just

another move to unfair business practice and sends a negative signal to rating agencies and offshore investors.

2.. The solar sector requires huge installation cost and if rates will fall like this it will fail to provide sustainable return on investment to the solar developers/investors. This will attract less domestic and foreign investment and dis-interest in R&D for the sector.

So to optimally harness the pollution free solar energy potential government should establish a Solar Power Review Board to partially regulate the solar tariffs and to create an equilibrium between interests of consumers and investors.

FORMAT II

As the the country has immense need, potential and possibility of solar power and government is ambitious to develop it at gigantic scale (1,00,000 MW

HOW GOOD FOR CONSUMER AND POLICY MAKERS

- 1 Cheap power bills to consumers would lead to low inflation and increased saving to generate more investible capital in economy.
- 2 Environment friendly energy would help government to achieve NADC targets.
- 3 Reduced dependency on Fossilized fuel (highly polluting) and Nuclear Power, which is costlier, intricate, less safer and demands greater foreign dependence.

HOW ITS NOT GOOD FOR INVESTORS

- 1 Excessive competition for copmpetitive bid price and escalation after commencing the project leads unfair business environment.
- 2 Reduced return on investment will discourage further domestic and foreign investment
- 3 Investors will have no surplus for R&D which will hamper further advancement of solar power technologies.
- 4 reduced profitability will reduce investor confidence and force them diversify their business in other profitable venture or look for other investment destinations.

So to optimally harness the pollution free solar energy potential government should establish a Solar Power Review Board to partially regulate the solar tariffs and to create an equilibrium between interests of consumers and investors.

Topic: Infrastructure – energy

4) Recently, the government unveiled its Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), with the intent to find a permanent solution to the financial mess that the power distribution is in. Critically examine if the design of this scheme would address the fundamental problems faced in power distribution sector. (200 Words)

The UDAY scheme launched by GOI in order to bail out the ailing DISCOMS by transferring their debts to state government is being seen with scepticism. The scheme can be expected to deliver its aim because of the following reasons:

- 1)Improvement in credit rating of DISCOMS would allow them to take further loans that can be used to cope up with inefficiencies and problems of transmission losses
- 2)Debt burden over states would coerce them to take some strong steps in order to make the finances of DISCOMS sustainable

However, other side of the story reveals that this scheme may not be a good option in the long run because:

- 1)Scheme intends to build a culture of dependency among DISCOMS that would continue to seek support from states to keep themselves going
- 2)Root of the problem that stems from poor revenue realization because of unrealistic prices charged from consumer has not been addressed
- 3)AT&C losses (Average terminal and commercial losses-sum total of technical loss, commercial losses and shortage due to non- realization of total billed amount) need to be handled through encouragement to customers for paying the due prices

Thus, it can be said that UDAY can only be a short term measure that gives room to DISCOMS to avail further finance in order to deal with technical losses but adequate measures need to be taken in order to ensure that the new loans are invested for infrastructure upgradation. Simultaneously, steps need to be taken for improving the revenues.

Topic: Indian economy – growth and development

5) Discuss the causes of deterioration in India's balance of payments (BoP) during 1990 and 1991 and what measures did then government take to overcome the crisis. (200 Words)

After independence India followed a policy of controlling and regulating various sectors of the economy. Though this helped in building a strong diversified industrial base, yet was the reason for a huge current account deficit, due to drop in foreign exchange reserves.

Reasons for deterioration in India's BOP in 1990s are as follows:

1. Inefficient policy management :

a. Expenditure on welfare programmes and defence that did not generate revenue

b. Taxation was insufficient source of revenue generation

c. PSUs did not generate enough revenue

d. Borrowed foreign exchange mostly spent on meeting consumption needs

e. No boost given to exports

2. Rise in oil prices and other essential commodities globally

Hence India approached IMF and IBRD to get \$7 billion as loan to manage crisis. They agreed on the condition that India would undertake the LPG reforms.

Steps taken: NEW ECONOMIC POLICY framed

It had 2 components

1. Stabilisation measures i.e. immediate steps to maintain foreign exchange reserves and curb inflation.

2. Structural reform measures :

Liberalisation :

a. Open up various sectors of the economy and reduce role of government in various market sector like industrial financial etc

b. Tax reforms

c. Foreign exchange reforms like rupee devaluation and free flotation of rupee value

PRIVATISATION

a. Disinvestment

b. Autonomy to PSUs

GLOBALISATION

a. Providing outsourcing to other countries

b. Removing trade barriers

Hence the result was unprecedented growth in GDP and trade with service sector growing the fastest.

Also refer,

<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2015/11/10/5-discuss-the-causes-of-deterioration-in-indias-balance-of-payments-bop-during-1990-and-1991-and-what-measures-did-then-government-take-to-overcome-the-crisis/#comment-2351417483>

Topic: Indian economy – growth; industrial policies

6) Do you think India in its zeal to compete with economic powers such as China and become a manufacturing power-house, is neglecting agriculture sector and farmers? What can be economic and political consequences of such policy? Critically analyse. (200 Words)

India being a agricultural country has its significant proportion (more than 55%) is dependant upon agriculture for its livelihood.

However the current impetus by the government towards manufacturing growth is raising some eye brows as it is leading towards somewhat negligence toward agricultural sector.

There can certain effects of the same:

- 1.Threat to food security: Agricultural activities leads to our food and nutrition and neglecting the same can lead to threat towards food security.
- 2.Marginalisation of Vulnerable Farmers: The Slow response towards the farmer can lead to Their Marginalisation hence leading to an increase in their vulnerability.
- 3.Increase in Social Ailments: Suicides,Domestic Violence etc. Can be the result of the distress in the farming community.
- 4.Distressed Migration: Negligence Towards Farmers leads them to sell their farms in distress and hence migrate towards Cities and towns adding to other issues like Overcrowding and unsustainable slums there.

However it can not be said completely that government has neglected the farms because it has taken various reforms for the same too:

- 1.Soil Health Card Scheme: For helping farmers to make sustainable use of Soil and hence planning crops in a better way
- 2.Second Green Revolution: For Sustainable Development of Agriculture in India and especially the regions that was neglected during the first Green Revolution like Eastern India
- 3.Better Social Security Schemes and Insurance Plans like New Agricultural Insurance schemes,Atal Pension Yojana, Kishan Vikash Patra and even Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana For better Credit Penetration.
- 4.Irrigation: Schemes like Rashriya Krishi Sinchayi Yojana and Other irrigation schemes can help farmers during Monsoon Anomalies.

However the government should make plans so as to give equal importance to both the Primary Agricultural Sector as well as Secondary Manufacturing sector so that it can be successful in all the important tasks of growth , job Creation and Food security.

Topic: Indian economy – employment

7) By 2050, according to analysis of NU data, India will account for 18.8 per cent of the global work force compared with 17.8 per cent today, toppling China from the top spot. Examine the significance of this shift and the challenges it poses to India in future. (200 Words)

India now constitutes to worlds second largest workforce sccond to china. Recent projections show that india will account for 18.8% of the global workforce compared to 17.8% today. overtaking china.

Significance:

-- it adds more to make in india initiative

-- more workforce for African and middle east countries which brings forex reserves.

-- which can also be veiwed as global economic power in terms of labour.

challenges

1)

India in this humongous workforce have very few skilled and semi skilled labour. which is very much required by india to excel in global manufacturing level.

2)

In addition india's majority workforce is mainly in unorgnised sector, mainly leading to exploitation of the labour by not giving what they actual are capable of. and with this loosing the tax revenues generated.

3)

Fruits of agriculture technology are not being transferred to field level which is making the rural youth to migrate towards urban areas for finding petty jobs.

To tap this rich demographic dividend, government should create policies in such a way that

1)

job creation should be on par with growing demand.

2)

Skill development for semiskilled and unskilled labour using the new initiatives of skill development mission which aims of imparting skill to 400 million by 2022.

3)

more collaboration with industries to impart training by appraticeship programmes for ITI students.

4)

reforms in higher education to favour more practical knowledge than rote learning.

5)

All policies must be in coherent with make in india initiative or any other of such kind which ensures growth and inclusive development

Topic: Resource mobilization

8) In India, the total amount from cesses is Rs 1.16 lakh crore. In the light of recent imposition of a cess of 0.5 per cent on all services on which service tax is paid for the cause of Swachh Bharat initiative, critically examine if India is unfairly taxing its citizens. (200 Words)

Finance Ministry has announced that from November 15 there

will be an additional 0.5% cess on utility of services, this cess will directly

contribute in Swachh Bharat Fund. Since announcement of yet another new cess

has open pandora's box of India's "cessing" Governance

Overuse of Cess in India

1. This 0.5% cess on services will be on top of 14% service tax making services more expensive
2. Duplication of collection for cleanliness – Local bodies already charge municipal tax
3. It will be another addition to various cesses – Education cess, Petrol cess etc
4. A section of taxpayers are complaining that Govt is implementing new taxes to reduce its fiscal deficit after announcing mega packages in Poll bound states
5. Education cess has failed to fulfill its aim of universal enrolment – experts are predicting Swachh Bharat Cess to have similar fate
6. Lack of transparency in utilization of Cess which is presently around 50,000-60,000 Crore
7. People are questioning why can't Govt use the tax collected from voluntarily disclosure of black money (Rs 3500 Crore)

Swacch Bharat Cess - a step towards cleanliness

1. Govt needs financial resources to ensure cleanliness in India
2. Swaach Bharat campaigns which are needed to bring change in mindset needs more resources
3. It will ensure direct involvement – people will can see their contribution for the noble task
4. The cess will be 2% on luxury services such as airlines - people using luxury can very well afford 2% additional cess

Govt should open its treasury for performance of duty for which it has been elected. It shouldn't also rely on directly taxing taxpayers for implementing its schemes and missions. Govt should encourage people to voluntarily join such campaign not forcefully tax in the name of SBM

Topic: Cropping pattern; agri issues

9) Examine the various non-policy problems faced by cotton growers in India and remedies needed to address these problems. (200 Words)

Increasing pest and flies attacks on cotton crops which is usually compounded by unexpected weather condition become the menace to cotton farmers. Though various policy measure taken by government are helping farmers to Identify and resolve various issues but these schemes need to be address non- policies problems too.

Non-Policy problems faced by cotton growers

--> Insect and Pest Attack

--> method and qty applied by farmers while using pesticides, herbicides etc

--. Indiscriminate spraying by farmers

--> Inadequate/incorrect using of fertilizer mixture

-> Unfavorable weather condition like raining at the time of flowering

Remedies

--> Advice pest control measures to farmers with the help of various platforms like KISAN MITRA, KISAN TV etc

--> Farmer need to be aware of the type of soil and amount of nutrients and fertilizers need to grow cotton crop and the same can be tackle with the help of schemes like SOIL HEALTH CARD and MRIDU PARIKSHAK schemes.

--> App or SMS based info availability regarding regional weather and soil concerns.

--> Judicious use of Bio- fertilizers and bio pesticides .

--> Development of innovative equipment to entrap flies like Yellow stick trap, suction trap etc

--> Use of drought and pest resistance Bt cotton seeds.

India as one of largest cotton exporter country should suitable address these issues to capitalize the same for economic development and betterment of cotton growers.

Topic: Cropping pattern; Food security

5) The System of Rice (or root) Intensification (SRI) is said to be boon to small farmers in poor and developing countries. Also it is said that popularising this method has upset MNCs that promote use of GM crops. Discuss SRI method, its benefits and reasons why it has upset few MNCs. (200 Words)

The System of Rice (or root) Intensification (SRI) is easy, cheap and required less change in traditional way of cultivation, while gives better result with respect to contemporary methods available.

-The method includes sowing of single seedlings instead of 3-4 in grid pattern.

-Land is kept comparatively drier than from traditional practices.

- Organic fertilizers and manure is used which not only make it cheap and good for health but also sustainable and environment friendly.

Although, it is good for small farmers and developing countries. The method has upset the MNC's :

- These MNC's have invested millions in research and development of new practices which will become redundant if the news is true.
- This method is environment friendly and requires less capital thus will become widely acceptable as GM crops are both costly and less environment friendly.
- Competitive efficient methods are against corporate interests who have virtual monopoly.
- Claims are made and verified at local level thus has given an excuse to MNC's to reject the claim.
- Many MNC's claims that these methods are effective but not new and the result is nothing but exaggeration.

Environmental friendly methods are the need of time and if efficient methods are available then instead of negating it, MNC's should invest in research and betterment of these technologies which will be win-win situation for all.

Topic: Indian economy – growth; Resource mobilization

6) Recently the union government eased foreign direct investment (FDI) norms across 15 sectors, including defence, civil aviation and broadcasting, to attract overseas funds and boost economic growth. Write a note on these reforms. (200 Words)

India has improved her ranking From 142 in 2015 To 130 Out of 187 Countries in ease of doing business 2016. This improvement was on the basis of parameters like start of business and availability of electricity.

Government has introduced FDI in many sectors as it aims to bring india in top 50 Nations on ease of doing business. Also, government is making efforts to approve most of the investments within a threshold through automatic route. It entails many benefits:

- It will reduce red tape and complex procedures to be followed,
- Introduction of new technologies.
- Increase in employment opportunities.

- Strengthen competition in domestic market.
- help in promoting make in india campaign
- auxilliary sectors , value chains would be boosted.

However, sustaining foreign investments would be a real challenge. FDI in aviation , construction, insurance, pension, defence should be well calibrated.

-The domestic problems in many of such sectors should not be ignored as it would put them at disadvantage is-a-vis foreign investments (like civil aviation sector reeling under resource crunch).

-For instance, investment in defence should be in such a way that the control and management rights remains in hands of indian authority.

these investments would repatriate profits bawk to the investing countries. Efforts , proper regulations and laws have to be made to allow the investors to reinvest profit in indian sectors.

-30% Procurement from domestic players and 50% Of investment in multi brand retail investment is commendable strategies. More such initiatives should be taken.

It would not only bring in capital, technology and build up forex but also give fillip to domestic manufacturers.

Topic: Economic growth

3) Discuss the potential and challenges of tourism sector in Northeastern India. (200 Words)

North East india comprise of the seven sister states in eastern part of india. Sikkim has also been recognized a NE state from 1990s.

the region have huge potential for tourism:

1)Nature:

=>With less development, there are many isolated beautiful spots in the region.

=>NE state is a biodiversity hotspot for its unique biodiversity. Presence of 2/3rd of world's one-horned rhinoceros in Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park shows the unique flora & fauna of region. Huge tea gardens, Eastern Himalayas, Tibetan monasteries adds flavour.

2)Adventure:

=>mountaineering, trekking, river raft boating adds the adventure side of these regions.

=>Govt could build more infra to realise the full potential of region

3)Culture:

=>Unique culture due to presence of people from different ethnicity. Buddhist, Muslim, Hindus, & other local religions fusion has created a unique experience for tourists.

=>Bihu dance, tribal culture, unique cuisine & music etc

But the area faces many challenges :

=>Difficult terrain, strategic location, etc

=>Violence & disturbance of public order in many parts of region.

=>Lack of infra like roads, housing, electricity etc & communication bottlenecks. Moreover, govt has not maintained a complete link with the region through facilities

=>Geographical isolation.

=>Less initiative from local govts as many local issues keep them away.

=>No inclusive policy & investment from centre in this sector as the region comes as a special state.

Proper upgradation of infra through joint efforts of centre & states, less, well online facilities, inclusive policy & advertisement for proper 'branding' of region is essential.

Topic: Conservation

4) “The climate change is viewed by countries as a diplomatic problem, whereas it is a planetary challenge about its boundaries, ecosystems and biodiversity.” In the light of the statement, critically examine major issues that need to be addressed in Paris Conference of Parties (COP-21). (200 Words)

Climate change necessarily in the present context means the negative outcomes of the baneful actions being inflicted upon the nature by the human actions.(23 words)

Climate Change today is leading to various disasters not only for the humans but for the whole gamut of flora and fauna.(21words)

However the Countries of the world owing to their 'not my problem' are taking the issue as a diplomatic settlement where each of them tries to find ways to ward their responsibilities off and try to hand the matter by making others liable.(36 words)

Challenges against Climate Change issue:

- 1.No Mutual Consent between developed and developing world over each other's role in emission cut.
- 2.Lack of finance and technology for sustainable production in developing countries.
- 3.Reluctance of developed nations to share its finances and technology with the developing world.(~55 words)

So the upcoming Paris Summit of United Nations Framework for Climate Change (CoP 21) which is going to be held in December this year shall discuss following issues on a urgent basis:

1. The methods of sharing the burden of emission cut between developed and developing nations.
2. The Financial Help by the developed and especially the funding in the Green Climate Fund which was set as a fund to aid in climate change mitigation in developing countries.
- 3.Better Technologies for Sustainable growth.
- 4.Innovative Fund Raising techniques like Green Bonds and Green Stock Exchanges(BSE-Greenex) etc.

5. Have a look towards the applicability of the INDC targets of various nations. (~75 Words)

Given the emphasis of Newly Announced Sustainable Development Goals for the year 2015- 2030 that has a lot of targets out of its 169 targets undertaking this challenges, it is for the sake of not only the island nations which will be the most affected ones but also for the whole world that we should try to make goals that lead us to our target of Green House emissions that leads to not more than 1.5 Degree Celsius rise in the global temperature.

Topic: Economic growth; Agriculture and technology

3) How can Make in India and Digital India programmes can be linked with agriculture to make the sector profitable and efficient? Suggest innovative ideas. (200 Words)

Make in India and Digital India-flagship scheme of India aimed at promoting manufacturing in India and bridging the digital divide respectively have great potential to play a transformative role in India's agriculture sector. The two programs can help in the following ways:

Make In India:

- 1) Growth of industries would create employment opportunities and surplus labor in agriculture sector can be employed
- 2) New industries could delve into traditional cottage industry sector like bidi making, thus bridging the gap between markets and production centres
- 3) Food processing industries and sharing of technical expertise could lead to increases in yield of crops and help farmers to fetch better prices for their crops
- 4) Sectors like poultry and fisheries can also progress because of efficient utilization of by-products and increase in exports through adoption of CODEX, HACCP
- 5) Government initiatives of R&D in agriculture sector can also be given a boost by the newly setup industries and thus new innovations like System of Rice Intensification can be adopted by farmers as per the region

Digital India:

- 1) Prices of crops can be disseminated to all farmers thus preventing any kind of distress sale
- 2) News about weather phenomena or hazardous events can be communicated so that preventive steps can be taken
- 3) Farmers can learn new ideas and way of cropping through help of internet
- 4) Exact location of utilizable fisheries in littoral waters can be communicated e.g. the scheme of Strengthening of Database and Geographical Information System for the Fisheries Sector
- 5) Data about customer preferences and recent market trends can also be made available to farmers so that the crops or the livestock or poultry can be chosen accordingly

Thus, the programs hold immense potential and efforts should be made to develop their strong linkages with agriculture sector through appropriate policy framework.

Topic: Land reforms

4) In the light of successful digitisation and computerisation of land records for land owned by defence, an argument is made that the Indian Defence Estate Services (IDES) be changed to an Indian Estates Service to manage and digitise all land held by various government departments. Elaborate and examine why. (150 Words)

Land reforms in India have been a heated topic since independence. With the expansion of infrastructure like Railways line, roads, government buildings etc. which have been built without any assessments; have distorted the market enormously leading to inefficiencies in land usage.

With the successful conduction of digitisation and computerisation of land records for land owned by defence, it is rightly said that a new service named Indian Estates Service could be established that manage and digitise all land held by various government departments at all levels. This will help positively in various ways such as:

--- It will help in efficient management of public land, helping to identify unused land which could be utilised by resource mobilisation.

--- Land area could be divided into forest land, agriculture land, pastoral land, and land for building so that government can conduct schemes related to these areas productively.

--- Publishing the findings and defining areas can help reduce the opportunities for the grabbing of public land.

--- Digitisation would even help in fixing borders which are currently mostly porous and the divisions are still undefined creating border issues; like in case of Arunachal Pradesh with China.

Moreover, property systems are a central facet of state functionality and are important indicators of its effectiveness. So to utilise it fully, assets need to be formally recognised by a legal property rights system which can be only be done by proper digitisation of land records.

Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security

5) Write a critical note on the importance of cooperation between India and its neighbours in fighting non-state actors posing security threat to India. (200 Words)

Threats to national security from non-state actors is becoming a global phenomena whereby disturbances in one part of the globe have the potential to spillover on other parts, thus necessitating\ cooperation between different nation-states. Such cooperation can be sought on different fronts:

1) Terrorism: India can collaborate with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Myanmar to fight non-state factions like ULFA, Al-Qaeda and to repulse any attacks from ISIS through proper information flows

2) Maritime fronts: Piracy in the Indian Ocean has remained a problem and in this regard, India can collaborate with Maldives and navies of littoral states of Indian Ocean

3)Cyber front: Internet penetration has grown by leaps and bounds and thus critical infrastructure of state is always at risk. This necessitates cooperation to share best practices among the states and coming forward to improve Internet governance

4)Financial front: Debacles in economy due to generation of black money and money laundering has to be tackled through cooperation in bilateral terms or through forums like Financial Action Task Force and G-20

However, for this strategy to be successful, a high level of trust is required so that the crucial information is not leaked by the neighboring countries thus helping the non-state actors. Thus, what is required is glorification of security as a matter of global interest so that cooperation from all nation-states can be ensured in a truthful manner.

Topic: Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping

8) Do you think the JAM Trinity (an acronym for Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and mobile numbers) might dismantle the current Public Distribution System? Examine. (200 Words)

As per Shanta Kumar committee recommendations , PDS leakages account for upto 45% of all grains . Thus JAM trinity is considered as its alternative to provide direct cash transfers to their saving account . However , concerns regarding dismantling the PDS have been forwarded .

Arguments for

1. Jan dhan bank account will transfer money , thus broaden his choices regarding quantity and quality of food basket consumption
2. Aadhar number helps in effective identification of beneficiaries , thus reducing duplication and exclusion of the needy sections
3. Mobile integration would promote real time information about government policies and awareness about their entitlements
4. Promote e-governance , thus achieving faster and efficient transfer while reducing corruption and administrative workload

5. Promote financial inclusion , thus improving savings and boosting rural economy

Arguments against

1. 40% of households have no access to banks
2. Direct cash can lead to misuse of money , inflation and diversion causing malnutrition
3. Low level of financial literacy
4. States like Chattisgarh , Tamil Nadu have effectively implemented PDS
5. It may dismantle the existing infrastructure of fair price shops , allowing local traders charge extorbitant money

So , PDS reforms like capacity building , computerisation , transparency, etc and promoting financial literacy and banking penetration would integrate JAM with PDS . This will help achieve food security and meet the Zero Hunger challenge

Topic: Economics of animal rearing

5) Critically analyse the economic impact of strident campaign against cow slaughter in India. (200 Words)

Recent campaign against cow slaughtering and beef banning opens up the debate about its impacts on the economy of the country and socio-economic implications on the individual/households.

Economic Impacts are :

- 1) Leather Industry : Will be hurt since banning of slaughter might lead to drastic fall of raw material supply, thus impacting the flayers, contractors, traders, truck drivers, distributors and retailers.
- 2) Unemployment and Poverty : Down-slide in leather industry might aggravate unemployment .Majority of the flayers are in dire need of employment who lacks alternative employment opportunities, thus leading to poverty, malnutrition, adversely impacting socio-economic conditions of people.

- 3) Slump in Export , thus impacting Current Account Deficit , Trade Deficit of the country.
- 4) Aggravating the agrarian distress : Farmers will be forced to maintain the cows by ban on slaughtering, thus increasing the maintenance burden on them. Financial distress of farmers will be increased by this
- 5) Dietary imbalance among the poor , who specially depend on beef , which is affordable compared to other nutritional source.
- 6) Decrease in per capita income of households, as well GDP of the country.
- 7) Discouragement to the allied activities - thus a blow to governmental efforts, to increase the growth rate of primary activities .Discouragement to MSME, cottage and rural industries.

Nevertheless, there are positive impacts too by the ban.- like Organic farming/manuring , Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana depend on manure for agricultural growth. Also, Banning might make farmers , traders, industries to eventually shift to other allied opportunities in the long run. Thus Any step in this regard must be taken by government weighing both the pros and cons to the economy as a whole, not only on the basis of religious sentiments.

Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism

6) It is said that despite 26/11, the Indian intelligence agencies continue to be ill-equipped to prevent future attacks. In the light of recent terrorist attacks on Paris by ISIS terrorists, critically comment on the threats to India by Daesh and its preparedness to handle such attacks. (200 Words)

Growing terrorist attacks across the world has raised some serious questions about ability of security and intelligence establishments of countries. India is not new to terrorist attacks but many new developments are frightening:-

- Ability of terrorists has increased not only on scale but also in their reach e.g. attack in Indian parliament and 9/11.

- Technological advancement, use of internet and highly educated individuals has given them an edge over traditional practices.
- Many of these attacks were state sponsored thus, just killing these terrorist may not work.
- Terrorist organizations like IS are now able to take on countries, like in Syria.
- Recent ethnic and religious clashes in India can become base for terrorist activities.

Given these threat India also has started many initiatives:-

- In the wake of 26/11, special task forces are created by states like Maharashtra and Karnataka and given latest weapons and training.
- Increase in networking and information sharing between different organs and with different

Countries is showing result which is evident from recent arrest of Chota Rajan.

- Government has also increased IT capabilities of these organization and closing down sites and blocking content which propagates terrorist philosophy.

Although, India has not faced any big terrorist attack in recent past but threats from Daesh is real and needs proper attention. Any solution should also address the core reasons of terrorism- Inequality, poverty and illiteracy.

Topic: Mobilization of resources

7) The Companies Act of 2013 mandates a contribution of two per cent of post-tax profits of companies to corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and some see this as a backdoor tax. Some argue that as companies spend at individual levels, the impact is less visible and also there is no guarantee of ensuring efficiency, accountability and competency. In this regard, what should be done to efficiently spend CSR funds? Discuss. (200 Words)

Companies Act of 2013 that mandated companies qualifying certain criteria to make investment for the common good through CSR funds has drawn ire from the critics regarding the efficiency of the arrangement. Reasons behind such an argument are:

1)Compartmentalized approach in expenditure: Spending by companies are not integrated with each other and thus does not provide the benefit that can accrue from channelizing funds and then spending the same

2)Lack of expertise: Companies are more conversant with business activities than the social activities and thus it is difficult to expect that the expenditure would be able to bring social change for the good of all because of lack of expertise in this field

3)Irregular availability of funds: Companies crossing the minimum threshold are warranted to spend certain part of their profits on CSR activities. However, in a scenario whereby such threshold is not cleared in some years, the existing projects may face a financial crunch

In order to do away with the above challenges, following measures can be taken:

1)Aggregation of expenditure: Allow companies to pool their funding before the same can be put to use for CSR activities

2)Bring expertise from NGOs: NGOs are able to perform well in activities for social change and thus they should be the guiding authority on the utilization of funds.

3)Accountability mechanisms: NGOs may be the guiding authority but companies should also set up accountability mechanisms to ensure that funds are used for intended purposes

4)Financial support: Government should also ensure its support to the projects started under CSR activities in order to ensure their long term sustainability

Bringing efficiency in utilization of CSR funds has the potential to augment government's effort to bring positive social change within the country.

Topic: Indian economy – growth

5) It is said that a drastic reduction in the use of cash in an economy has several potential benefits. What are these benefits? India is said to have one of highest cash to GDP ratio. Why is India finding it difficult to move towards a cashless economy? Examine. (200 Words)

With the surge in the number of credit/debit cards, net banking and mobile banking transactions, the world has opened its eyes to the benefits of cashless economy. which are:

1. curtailing the menace of counterfeit currency.

2. **money** is protected from physical damage, loss/theft of physical currency.

3. cashless transactions require a financial intermediary. this puts banks in an important position and in turn bring more money under circulation for loans.

4. **it** helps in keeping a record of financial transactions. this will curb illicit money usage.

5. **it** is also environmentally prudent as it reduces environmental costs of printing and manufacturing paper money.

6. **it** may herald a future possibility of a single/common currency used **worldwide**. **it** will address issues of convertibility and volatility.

But India is finding it difficult to transform its economy into a cashless one as:

1. lack of financial literacy and financial **inclusion**. **eg**: even well off senior citizens are averse to using online banking.

2. weak cyber security **infrastructure**. **it** leaves people vulnerable to phishing, theft, hacking, impersonation etc.

3. huge black market shadow economy.

4. RBI's cautious attitude which is averse to any revolutionary change.

5. basic infrastructure like connectivity, laptops, mobile phones are the items of privilege of a few.

But initiatives like Digital India, JDIY, smart cities would indeed give an impetus to this transformation. It should also be emphasised that cashless economy also has its vulnerabilities. A balanced, gradual change with suitable cushioning should be the way forward.

Topic: Investment models; Resource mobilization

6) The 12th Plan envisaged private investments at 48 per cent of the total investment of Rs 56 lakh crore in the infrastructure sector. But it is said that even half of that target is not met. In order to bring more private investment, what should be done? Discuss. (200 Words)

Infrastructure is the back bone for overall development of a country. Indian infrastructure has been suffering from poor investments both from government and private sector. The 12th plan envisaged private investments at 48% of total investments in infrastructure sector. But due to various reasons even half of the target investment could not be realised.

The measures to bring more private investment in infrastructure are

- 1) The model of PPP should be revisited to ensure level playing field, between state owned players and private players.
- 2) competitive neutrality should be maintained while allocating projects.
- 3) provisions for renegotiation should be ensured on already commenced projects to address the problems increased project costs.
- 4) labour reforms and land acquisition act amendments should be done while upholding the genuine rights of labourers and farmers.
- 5) FDI norms should be eased to promote further investment
- 6) Tax reforms should be expedited like rolling out of GST with out further delay
- 7) Independent tribunals, dispute settlement mechanisms should be set up to carry out time bound arbitrations.
- 8) norms related to lock in period in infrastructure projects etc should be eased and proper exit policy should be devised.
- 9) restructuring of loans and bailing out by banks can help resume stalled projects by private players.

Recent government steps like decreasing corporate tax, easing FDI norms, committee on revitalising PPP, labour reforms, steps to rolling out GST etc will address the issue to some extent. To reach the stated target government has to take the steps to improve the environment of over all doing business .

Topic: Mobilization of resources

7) “Policymakers need to take cognisance of the fact that it is domestic investment which has provided an overwhelmingly large share of India’s capital formation and has, therefore, been instrumental in pushing up the country’s growth rates. India should be careful not to create two classes of investors wherein the foreign investors, including returning Indians, are given disproportionate advantages.” In the light of recent FDI reforms announced by the government, analyse the statement. (200 Words)

With recent liberalisation of FDI policy, which has relaxed norms in 15 sectors shows government's run towards increasing foreign inflows as well as making system more automatic, easy, rationalised and simplified.

But it has been observed that these liberalisation norms have evolved two classes of investor viz. foreign investors (FIs) and domestic investor (DIs); former getting disproportionate advantages. This is mainly due to:

--- Take over by FIs: most of the Indian firms are being acquired by the FIs, shifting market in the hands of foreigners.

--- Payment for IPRs: in-spite of acquiring new technologies or even if DIs utilise these technologies, they have to make a variety of payments for use of these 'intellectual property'.

--- Non-payment of Dividends: many foreign companies do not pay dividends and are still sending remittances abroad on account of royalty payments.

--- Threat to domestic companies: with FIs backed by huge financial resources at their disposal is proving to be inimical to the emergence and survival of domestic enterprises.

--- Investment's large part is in the form of loans, while only 10 per cent of total inflows are direct equity flows; which shows that most of the profits earned – repatriates as interest payments.

Although FDI makes market more efficient; it is required that India reach to FDI not merely because of the capital they needed, but more importantly, for the technologies to make their entities more competitive. This will increase capacity of domestic companies, giving fair play to all the stakeholders.

Topic: Conservation

7) Critically comment on the provision of the Environmental Laws (Amendment) Bill which has been made public for inviting comments. (200 Words)

The proposed Environmental laws amendment bill 2015 seeks to amend EPA act 1986 and NGT act 2010. The main objective of this amendment is to provide for an

effective deterrent provisions and introducing the concept of monetary penalty for violation and contraventions of environmental laws. However the main drawbacks of proposed bill are

- 1) no scientific and legal basis adopted for categorisation of offences as substantial, non substantial, and minor. The criteria is arbitrary and illogical.
- 2) it envisages the creation of adjudication authority consists of executive members only. It will leads to unaccountable official discretion.
- 3)The proposed bill envisages maximum penalty as 20 crores irrespective of nature of industry, It is irrational .our past experience with Bhopal gas tragedy is an example for this.
- 4) the proposed amendment envisages environmental problem mainly in the context of pollution. Other contexts like it's impact on livelihood of people etc are neglected.
- 5)with this proposed amendments the power of NGT to award damages and compensations will be curtailed and NGT will be made accessible only for polluting units for redressal of grievances and not for affected communities. (effected communities should approach district judiciary not NGT)
- 6)the bill violates the India's international commitment under Rio Declaration 1992, specifically contrary to the polluter pay principle.

The stated objectives of this bill are noble but while ensuring this government should consider the views of all stakeholders and proper time should be given to think tanks for discussions and deliberations and the above issues should be addressed without ambiguities.

Topic: PDS

8) Discuss the practical solutions that can plug loopholes in PDS. (200 Words)

The Public Distribution System was introduced with a view to ensure food security among the masses. However, off late certain shortcomings related to identification of beneficiaries, leakages of food grain, and nutritional challenges have crept into the system. These problems can be dealt with the following solutions:

#Identification of beneficiaries

The recently concluded Socio Economic Caste Census should be used to identify beneficiaries. Further, the list of beneficiaries should be continuously updated to avoid possibility of inclusion and exclusion errors

#Leakages of food grains

1)Tracking movement of food grain bags through GPS chips e.g. in Chhattishgarh and ODisha

2)Decentralized procurement to ensure that grain movement is reduced and hence less number of avenues for leakages

3)Social audit of PDS and establishing vigilance committees to keep an eye over the performance

4)Introduction of Biometrics (UID) at Fair Price Shops level so that grains are distributed to intended beneficiaries only

5)Short Message Service to inform beneficiaries about the delivery of food grains in FPS so that shopkeeper can be kept accountable

6)Outsourcing of Food Corporation of India's operations-Procurement, storage and distribution as recommended by Shanta Kumar Committee to bring efficiency in operations

7)Cash transfers linked with Jan Dhan Accounts as has been done successfully in Mexico and Brazil

8)Use of smart cards or food coupons by the beneficiaries while providing the trader with facility to encash such coupons on any banks

#Nutritional challenges

FPSs may be asked to sell other items like pulses and coarse grains at market price along with rice and wheat to ensure that beneficiaries are accessible to such food items. This would ensure that balanced diet is provided to the beneficiaries.

The utilization of smart systems along with implementation of "Digital India" holds great potential for bringing changes in PDS system.

Topic: Agriculture; Irrigation

5) Compare and contrast the objectives and performance of Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI) scheme with that of 1960s Green Revolution. (200 Words)

Green revolution was started in 1960s mainly to ensure food security in country. BGREI has come at a time when nation has already achieved many objectives of green revolution. Its main aim is to shift focus from western part of country (where unsustainable cultivation has slowed the process of production) to eastern parts like Assam, WB, Eastern UP, Odisha etc

Objectives:

=> While green revolution mainly focused to ensure food security by increasing production of main crops like wheat, rice etc, BGREI also has provision regarding other farm enterprises like aquaculture, tree plantation etc.

=> Both includes provision like using machines for cultivation, High yielding varieties of seed, good irrigation & water management practices.

=> BGREI has provision regarding crop rotation by ensuring indigenous crops like pulses, potato, maize etc with rice & wheat in the eastern parts. This has been a major step & a learning from Green revolution from western parts to ensure soil sustainability.

Performance & future prospects:

=> Although BGREI has given weightage to aquaculture, tree plantation, livestock etc, but less funding has created problem here.

=> On the one hand productivity has increased of eastern areas but still we should learn certain aspects from faults in western parts. Firstly, there should be proper water management & harvesting mechanism to prevent flood & water logging for soil conservation. Secondly, use of fertilizers & pesticides should be in the desired limit. Soil health card, Satellite tech, more experts could help for it.

=> Lastly, proper post harvesting & marketing funds is required & it should include all crops in the domain.

=> System of rice intensification, hydroponic cropping etc could also be applied.

BGREI under umbrella of RKVY is a commendable effort from govt to ensure a positive growth rate in agriculture & food security in the country. Some trimming in the scheme based on above measures is needed for maximum proliferation.

Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas

6) Compare and contrast how the governments of India and France responded to terrorist attacks on Mumbai (2008) and Paris (2015) respectively. Which kind of response do you think is more effective in dealing with terrorism? Justify. (200 Words)

The modus operandi of the terrorist attacks in France have been compared to that of the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008, having attacked multiple places with only intention to maximise casualties. But the response to the attacks have been completely varied.

The Indian government, even after receiving enough proof of Pakistani involvement in the terror strike, did not seek to wage a war against the nation, as it would lead to further escalation of violence, and an immense division of society amongst Muslims and Hindus. This could be detrimental to the internal security and stability of the nation. Furthermore, attacks on the belligerent nation by India could lead to more terrorist activities in retaliation.

In contrast, the French government has claimed that the nation is at war and has taken the fight against terrorists. By bombing the city of Raqqa, an ISIS strong hold, France hopes to eliminate all those responsible for the attacks on Paris. But by resorting to such violence, the nation is both provoking more attacks from other groups, and also dividing the society amongst religious lines, against its constitutionally guaranteed secularism.

India's stance against Pakistan must not be seen as an act of cowardice, but as an act of restraint, where the nation gave importance to its citizens and its internal security, at a higher level than waging war. Our foreign policy, championed by the Gujral Doctrine to avoid conflict with our neighbours helped the nation better in making that decision of restraint. The French government, backed by western interests, has stepped up its fight against ISIS, but at what cost. An eye for an eye, only makes the world blind.

Topic: Resource mobilization

8) “The Swachh Bharat cess imposed by the union government is part of a continuum of moves, growing dependence on indirect taxes, that is making the Indian tax system even more regressive.” Comment. (200 Words)

Recently the Union government imposed 'Swachh Bharat cess' of 0.2% in the form of indirect tax. This means burden of 50 paise for every Rs.100 on citizens. While Swachh Bharat initiative is welcomed the compulsion on each head for its contribution in the form of cess is not justified.

Swachh Bharat cess is mainly criticized for following reasons:

===>Already the indirect tax on individual head is increased by 36.9% in just 7 months of this fiscal year, again cess imposition can create burden on common man.

===>this is regressive tax which is same for all citizens irrespective of their incomes which can indirectly increase gap between rich and poor.

===> The fiscal year budget announced decrease of corporate tax by 5% and increasing tax on citizens to fill the gap.

===>Although government received huge amount of voluntary funds for the mission, question arises the necessity of making it mandatory to contribute.

Some measures that can be taken to overcome the burden on exchequer citizen friendly are;

===>Taxes imposed should be made progressive that is imposition of taxes based on their income to bridge the gap between rich and poor.

===> Additional tax can be imposed on super rich (millionaires) based on their annual income.

===>Corporate responsibility should be made mandate to join hands with government in these kind of initiatives.

===>Although cess is imposed, reduction of taxes in other forms should be made to help common man to balance the burden.

==>Corruption, leakages in grants released for projects should be taken care of to avoid public money concentrating on few hands.

More citizen friendly tax reforms can also help reduce burden on common man. Profit making corporates should be encouraged to actively take part in such initiatives through PPP models.

Topic: Achievements of Indians in S&T

9) Many reports have revealed that engineering education in India is in crisis. Examine the causes and suggest what measures are needed to fix its problems. (200 Words)

Commercialization of higher education led to the crisis in unskilled engineering force in our country.

Some of the causes are:

1. Driven by market opportunities and lax regulatory- fake universities/ degrading education / lack of infra as well as professors.
2. regulatory authorities like UGC and AICTE have been trying to extirpate private universities that run courses with no affiliation and recolonization.
3. lack of transparency in accounts etc
4. No funds for research purpose.

Measures to fix this problems are:

1. incentive good performance to generate competition.
2. granting excessive autonomy to the universities in terms of curriculum, recruitment, tenure and agenda setting with greater say of the faculty and students.
3. identify and empower top 50 university in every possible manner.
4. Strict Guidelines for opening new institutions and weed out fake universities.
5. Entrance exam for teachers to teach in even private institutions.

Its not only about the education of students but a matter of unemployment and of national security also.

Topic: Basics of cybersecurity

10) According to a report, nearly half of India's Internet-using population has been affected by cybercrime during the past year. Write a critical note on nature of these crimes and their impact on affected people. (200 Words)

With increase in internet penetration into India and no. of user in India, the criminal activities have started taking place in cyber world and has been.

The nature of cyber crime taking place and their impact are :

a)

Hacking- intrusion in someone IT system without their knowledge and permission. Stealing/erasing the information present in their victim's system. Due to which many sensitive data are being stolen. Eg – hacking of kerala police website in oct, 2015

b)

Virus, Malware,etc-

Introduction of malicious code into the victim IT system, due to the functioning of the system is hindered/ data in the system is lost. Eg- new year virus in 2015.

c)

Cyber stalking- Many

women are prone to this crime, where in criminal follow every cyber footprints of the victim, and post negative messages to their victim. It would emotional /psychological affect their victim. Eg – many film celebrities are prone to this attack.

d)

Impersonation on

someone- many time criminal impersonate someone by capturing data of their impersonator, to fool the victims.

e)

Cyber-phishing-

acquiring to sensitive data like userid, password, credit card info, etc by masquerading as trust worthy entity, and use the captured information for malicious deeds. Eg- capturing credit card information, stealing money from their account. Due to victim are robbed of their money.

f)

Cyber-terrorism-

attacking the highly sensitive and secured installation of government website/ server to destroy them, capture the information, or erase the information. Eg- attack on usa social security server, to capture all the person details in 2014

To prevent such attack, adequate precautions must be taking with having secure anti-virus, anti-hacking software and not giving user id and password to whom ever we know.

Topic: Infrastructure – energy

4) “Uday (Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana), the Centre’s scheme for turning around electricity distribution companies lacks a strong, accessible monitoring mechanism critical for its success.” Examine. (200 Words)

UDAY is a reform package for the loss making electricity distribution companies (discoms). The scheme is aimed at providing financial turnaround and revival of discoms by improving operational efficiencies, reduction of interest cost and enforcing financial discipline.

However, it is being mooted that for turning around electricity distribution companies, there is a need to create strong monitoring mechanism, due to following reasons:

--- As discoms are highly under debt, due to retakes of funding by banks; shows that a monitoring mechanism is needed that will try to curb this reoccurring cycle and regulate it.

--- Since UDAY transfer the debt in hands of State government, coupled with expected 3 to 4 percentage point reduction in interest rates – may increase the losses if not utilised pragmatically.

--- Losses due to inadequate tariff increases, poor power purchase planning, lack of timely subsidy payments, and inefficiencies in metering and billing.

--- Loss reduction is to be aided by circle-wise targets, feeder and DT metering, and upgrade or replacement of transformers. Regions with sustained loss reduction are to be incentivised by increased hours of supply.

Thus it is imperative to create a monitoring mechanism that may infuse technical expertise in the system and work with respective states’ discom to improve their performance largely by introducing newer technology to reduce transmission losses and other pilferages. Such a mechanism will also include monitoring of lending by banks. Apart from that, in longer run, it may help in making electricity accessible to all and its provision 24X7 as ambitioned the government.

Topic: Achievements of Indians in S&T

5) Write a note on 4-D and 5-D imaging technologies and their applications. (150 Words)

4-D Imaging technology: Visual representation of 3D images continuously in order to give a sense of the volume of the object alongwith time is called 4D imaging. Ultrasound is an example.

5-D imaging technology: Visual representation of moving images (4D) which are from different time intervals in order to create a time-lapse illustration of a moving object is called 5-D Imaging. Time lapse-videos showing the growth of flowers is an example

Applications of 4D imaging:

1. Resources - Use in remote sensing satellites (to give a visual representation of resources)
2. Disaster management - Monitoring of destructive weather conditions like cyclones
3. Medical technology – Laproscopic procedures, heart surgeries etc

Application of 5D imaging:

1. Resources - Obtaining information about the change in resources of a region over a time period. For example, increase or decrease of fish population in a region
2. Disaster management - Information about regions which have a higher tendency to give rise to conditions of cyclones
3. Medical technology – Obtain spectral growth of tissues, organs etc to pinpoint at the correct source of diseases

Topic: e-technology in the aid of farmers; robotics

6) Write a note on the applications of robotics in agriculture. (150 Words)

Robotics is one of the means to implement automation in agriculture which will bring about the much needed technological revolution and improve its productivity.

They can help in the following ways –

1. Automated harvesting, weed control, sorting, packing etc.
2. Livestock application such as automatic milking, washing etc.
3. Assist farmers in using precise amount of fertilizers based on soil health

4. Protect farmlands from pests
5. Provide information on weather conditions
6. Help farmers to comply with hygiene standards for produce

Impact –

1. Lower the amount of land present as fallow or culturable wasteland
2. Increased efficiency and lower margin for error in activities such as sorting, packaging etc.
3. Prevention of soil fertility depletion due to scientific usage of fertilizers
4. Increased efficiency and lowering of losses due to efficient pest control
5. Assist farmers in implementing course-correction measures based on prevailing and future weather conditions
6. Greater access to markets due to better standards of produce

Topic: Awareness in the field of biotechnology

7) What do you understand by BioGel? Examine its applications. (150 Words)

While the medical fraternity still continues its fight to find an ANSWER to CANCER, the discovery of "BIOGEL" by researchers of the University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre, will indeed be a major breakthrough in cancer treatment.

BioGel, a compound made from the biodegradable material chitosan obtained from the shells of crustaceans have the unique property to remain liquid room temperature and gel at body temperature. It is non-toxic, eco-friendly and have the potential to revolutionise treatment of cancer if it works on patients.

Examining applications of BioGel:-

- i) Being non-toxic and compatible with anti-cancer cells, it can encapsulate tumour specific cells and be injected into tumours directly.
- ii) The localized approach helps kill cancer cells with greater efficiency and without having side-effects on adjacent cells.
- iii) Have successfully addressed melanoma and kidney cancer in invitro models.

iv) Besides its application in cancer treatment, BioGel has excellent water absorption properties and can act as a soil additive for moisture control and reduce irrigation requirements.

v) Acts as a tackifier for revegetation & erosion control

vi) As a superabsorbent polymer(SAP) for hygiene products with improved absorbing properties compared to conventional SAP

vii) As a high performance moisturizer providing skin care benefits.

Biogel, with the potential of multidimensional applications, is indeed an intelligent innovation.

Topic: Indian economy – growth and development

4) Critics argue that none of the economic reforms introduced in recent months are either transformative nor structural. What do you understand by transformative and structural reforms? why they are needed? Also examine if critics are correct. (200 Words)

Structural reforms are those that alter the way government works and are institutional in nature. e.g. reform of subsidy regime, increased spending on social infrastructure and GST.

Transformative reforms are those that go beyond specific proposals to reform existing programmes and policies. They address structural causes by linking systemic issues. They may include structural or radical proposals but their ultimate goal is beyond these to bring COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION. eg proposed National Health Assurance Mission: India's universal health plan.

While structural reforms are necessary to ensure growth in the long term, the first and foremost aim of transformative reforms is catering to human needs by transforming existing system.

Critics argue that the slew of economic reforms introduced by the government are neither structural nor economic as :

- 1) The widely appreciated power reforms though a genuine achievement still leaves the central problem untouched by lack of monitoring mechanism and compulsory compliance of states.
- 2) Foreign direct investment relaxation fails to address the very real questions surrounding the growth of e-commerce i.e. legal and policy framework for foreign institutions in India.
- 3) Lower fiscal deficit, stabilised the rupee and the current account deficit, and reduced inflation is directly related to global fall of oil prices, than any specific govt action.

However, they are not completely right, as the government has brought mammoth programmes for transforming India : Make in India, Skill India and Digital India to promote employment - manufacturing, skilling of demographic capital and efficiency in governance. Due to their diverse application, the results would take some time to manifest fully. Along with it structural reforms like GST and universal health policy are in the way as well.

Topic: Resource mobilization

5) Write a critical note on the economic implications of latest pay commission. (200 Words)

The implications of the 7th Pay Commission to the economy are as follows:

Negative impacts –

- (i) Higher consumer spending - If the domestic producers are not able to service this demand, imports will increase, affecting our BoP
- (ii) Increased Non-Plan Expenditure – Affect non-plan expenditures, thus affecting the FRBM Act directions of eliminating effective Revenue Deficit by March 2018
- (iii) Protein inflation – Among the biggest beneficiaries are the lowest ranked employees. Hence, demands for items like meat, fish, fruits etc. would go up

(iv) No link between pay-hike and performance – The recent focus on improving government employee efficiency to improve economic performance will remain subdued

(v) Growing inequality – The gap between the middle classes (bulk of government employees) and lower classes (unorganized sector, farmers etc) may increase

Positive impacts –

(i) Motivation for domestic producers – Due to increased demand and specially synergizes with the government's push for industrial growth

(ii) Higher tax collections – Higher income tax collections and gradual phasing out of subsidies will offset government expenditure

(iii) Diversification of agriculture – Higher demand for protein-rich goods will motivate farmers to grow non-food-grain crops

(iv) Parity between government and corporate salaries – Encourage more people with better skills to compete for government jobs

(v) Higher savings – Greater liquidity with banks which can be utilized to provide more loans to farmers, village-level entrepreneurs etc

Topic: Prevention of money laundering

6) Discuss the measures taken by the government to curb the domestic flow of black money and money laundering. (200 Words)

Black money and money laundering have been imposing blocks in the economic sector that greatly hinder the nations' growth. The government has taken steps to control these menaces through;

1. Creation and Implementation of the PMLA - Prevention of Money laundering act 2003, which ensures that illicit financial flows are kept under check by the government.

2. Giving investigative powers to the CBDT (central board of directive taxation) to investigate possible cases of tax evasion.

3. Creation of various SIT (special investigative teams) for the sole purpose of tackling problems of black money.
4. Internationally, India has signed DTAA's with many nations thereby controlling tax evasion by investors from other nations.
5. India is also a full member of the FATF - Financial action task force, an international organization out to control terror financing and money laundering by sharing information with members.

While the government has recognized the problems created by black money and money laundering, their efforts still need some vigour, through reforms such as;

1. Widening the scope for provision of PAN on transactions of lower values and across various type of transactions.
2. Focusing on controlling black money flows within India.
3. Ensuring that banks and 3rd party non financial institutions provide to the income tax offices, PANs of clients whose transactions are above specified threshold, periodically and enforce other KYC norms strictly.
4. Enforcing stricter penalties and laws against those involved in such crimes.
5. Moving towards a Cashless economy so that all transactions can be tracked and consequently accounted for.

The panacea to our problems of black money and money laundering has been set up by our law makers, and now its enforcement is all that remains. This way, we can weed out such wrong practices and eradicate illicit finances in India.

Topic: Employment; Industrial policies

3) Several studies show our impressive growth since liberalization has not been accompanied by the expected growth in employment. Do you think automation in manufacturing would exacerbate the problem in coming days? What should be India's strategy in this regard? Examine. (200 Words)

India has been able to achieve impressive growth in last two decades owing to the structural changes adopted by govt to liberalize the economy. However the growth

has not been augmented by consequent growth in employment because of which it is often termed as 'Jobless Growth'. Some of the reasons can be stated as follows-

1. Double digit nominal growth in GDP was often associated with service sector which mainly include high skilled lean labour outsourcing companies.
2. Industries couldn't be developed owing to lack of skills, problems in land acquisitions and environmental clearances. Labour laws were also rigid for a liberalized economy, therefore majority of new investment went into capital intensive industries rather than labour intensive.
3. Increased pace of automation compounded by falling prices of technology and artificial intelligence further exacerbated the cost of developing a labour intensive industrial base in Indian economy.
4. Competition from china and south-east asian nations in cheap labour industry pushed india towards services sector in order to seek short term growth thereby neglecting long term policy formulation.

Hence, in present time Indian govt has realised the importance of having a long term policy in Industrial sector by announcing projects such as Make in India (National manufacturing policy, 2012), Skill India, Shramev Jayate Labour reforms etc. However even though govt can succeed in implementing structural reforms, India in 21st century is further faced by never ending technology advancement and IT revolution. Appropriate strategy towards this problem must include-

1. Promoting skill India initiatives so as to prepare demographic advantage over cheap technology.
2. Promoting Labour intensive industries such as textile, construction which don't require much capital intensive manufacturing.
3. Promoting India as a hub for heavy engineering goods industry which require labour for producing capital intensive machines and products that are required in technology intensive industries.

Topic: Resource mobilization; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate

4) It is said that assuming the government implements the 7th Central Pay Commission report in toto, the biggest relative loser will be the military. Examine why. (150 Words)

Some of the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission that can be termed as not-so-pro-military are:

- 1) Earlier All India Services (IAS, IPS, IFS and IFoS) and Military were treated as equals when salaries were decided
- 2) Later IAS and IFS were upgraded owing to their 'Important Field Work'. But IPS and IFoS were equal to military personnel
- 3) 7th Pay Commission have upgraded the other two services also, leaving military personnel alone.
- 4) Now benefits enjoyed by these All India Services includes higher salary and four increments in 13 years of Service. However, there is no such provision for military
- 5) 'Hardship Allowance' to IAS Officers for working outside the 'Comfort Zone' , say in Guwahati, is Rs. 70,000, It is relatively very high than the hardship allowance given to army officers for working in Siachen Glacier, which is Rs. 31,500

These are the Provisions due to which military personnel can be termed as relative biggest loser.

Topic: Conservation; Pollution

5) In your opinion, on what principles – keeping in mind, an agreement that is good for the planet, equitable for developing countries, and promotes India's interests – should the upcoming Conference of the Parties on climate change should negotiate on? Discuss. (200 Words)

The principles of negotiations from Indian side will be guided by need to keep balance between emerging Indian economy and the climate change which haunts it. General principles are,

1. Common but differentiated responsibilities: All nations have the common responsibility but developing nations must get different treatment on the fact that they have to compromise little bit for bringing the growth of economy. While developed countries who are real responsible for today's climate change must bear larger responsibility. India as the representative of developing nations must negotiate this.

2. Climate change fund: India must negotiate on setting the \$100 billion fund as promised by the developed countries, But nothing was done to do so. The mechanism of setting fund and disbursing it must be created. This fund then can be used by the developing nations to create the green infrastructure (energy, etc.).

3. Green technology: there must be mechanism for the green technology transfer among developed and developing countries.

4. World research consortium: On the lines of CERN (research on birth of universe), a scientific group must be established to find out the newer technologies which can replace current polluting technology, technology which can give green energy in affordable price,

Climate change is biggest issue. The recent floods in Chennai and drought situations in India alarms the nation to create world effort in coherent, effective and cooperative manner against climate change.

Topic: Marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints

6) “A unified agricultural market and a implementation of Karnataka model of APMC act can help resolve the issues of all the stakeholders.” Discuss. (200 Words)

Issues associated with the APMCs –

(i) Cartelization – Agents in APMC band together and restrain from higher bidding, thus lowering the income for farmers

(ii) Low Economic freedom of farmers – Under the various State APMC Acts farmers are required to sell their produce in only government designated mandis, further promoting cartelization

(iii) High licencing fees – Crowds out competition and ensures that only village/urban elites operate in APMCs and varying among the fees

(iv) Conflict of interest – APMCs play the role of both regulator and markets

Positive aspects of Karnataka Model –

(i) Integration of main-market yards and sub-yards into a single licencing system

(ii) Automated auction and post-auction facilities for improving efficiency and transparency

(iii) Measures of determining quality of produce made available in the markets

(iv) Linking all APMCs electronically for a single State price for every commodity

Benefits of National Agricultural Markets to farmers –

(i) Freedom of pricing and freedom of access

(ii) Would encourage farmers to invest in storage facilities

(iii) Diversification of crops

(iv) Lower dependence on village money-lender and opportunity to raise finances from national and international markets

How current issues will be resolved?

(i) Weakening of cartels

(ii) No widespread differences in agri-prices throughout the country

(iii) Increasing economic conditions of farmers

(iv) APMCs can solely focus on regulating produce

Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

7) What do you understand by near field communications (NFC)? It is said that NFC would create a world where one needs no credit cards, no loyalty cards, no physical train passes or bus tickets. Examine why. (200 Words)

NEAR FIELD COMMUNICATION

NFC is a type of contact-less, short range communication technology based on radio waves between mobile devices and an NFC tag embedded a card reader, a smart poster or even an advertisement. No power or battery is required in the device being read. The NFC is an offshoot of radio-frequency identification (RFID), the technology uses radio waves and can be used to retrieve information, and exchange small data files on the go as well.

HOW IT CAN MAKE WORLD SMARTER

This technology is being used in many countries for making card and cardless payments and smart traveling tickets. It is fastly penetrating into India through various private sector banks.

Although NFC enabled cells and payment terminals both are presently not very common in India, still since it absolves an individual to have many debit/credit cards and remember various IDs and passwords so expected to be extremely popular among youths.

Certainly it will make human life even more convenient but in a country where still more than three fourth population has no access of Smartphones and internet it seems a long haul journey. But the initiatives like Digital India and PMJDY if robustly implemented can make it possible in near future in urban India and later will penetrate in rural India also.

Also refer this video for better understanding,

<https://youtu.be/Gbv2Bli9i58>

Topic: Economic growth

5) In your opinion, what is the most significant driver of economic growth in India over the last year? Should India continue to depend on this factor? Examine. (200 Words)

Most Significant driver of economic growth in India over the last year is Slip in Oil prices which contributed to about 2% of the GDP so which by centre apathy for decreasing oil prices giving 2 way boost. It help govt to weed out diesel subsidies, invest more in social sector schemes and capital formations. However, India cannot always depend on this factor because earlier also in 2008 and 1996 oil prices rose again.

Even RBI governor also caution about the reversal of downward trends rising out of geopolitical risk. The current downturn in oil prices underlines the cyclic nature of commodity trade and illustrates OPEC's reduced regulatory capacity consequent to it supplying only 40% of global demand. While shale Revolution may be a new and price-sensitive factor, it is unlikely to vanish with time or with lower prices. During

past oil price fall in 1986, 1993-99 and 2008, the lower prices invariably spurred consumption and the prices bounced back. SO there is no reason to believe that the oil prices shall not rise again.

<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2015/11/25/5-opinion-significant-driver-economic-growth-india-last-year-india-continue-depend-factor-examine-200-words/#comment-2377801050>

Topic: Resource mobilization

6) Critically evaluate the objectives and performance of recently launched gold monetisation scheme of the union government. (200 WOrds)

The Central govt introduced 3 gold schemes - Gold Monetisation scheme, Gold sovereign bonds, and Gold coins.

The objectives of the schemes -

1. To unlock the estimated 20,000 tonnes of gold lying idle with households, temples, and trusts.
2. To reduce the imports of gold. India imports 800 to 900 tonnes of gold every year.
3. To reduce the current account deficit. Gold accounts for 15% of the total imports.
4. To make productive use of gold.
5. Banks can account deposited gold as SLR and thus help use its liquidity in productive assets.

However the performance of schemes will be affected due to

1. Social factors
 - a. gold is emotional asset
 - b. The gold depositors will not receive the jewellery items in the same form they deposited. The deposited gold will be melted away and redeemed in the form of gold bars or cash.

2. The lack of infrastructure - Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certified purity and collection centres, inadequate number of collection centres - india currently has only 15000 collection centres out of 3.5 lakh jewellery centres.
3. lack of clear guidelines to scheduled commercial banks from RBI regarding interest rates, melting charge fees, tax guidelines etc.
4. The interest rate of 2.75% on gold monetisation scheme, though higher than the interest rate of earlier scheme, Gold Depository Scheme, but still lower than other other financial products offered.

Recently, The Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council said that so far only 400 gms of gold was deposited under new schemes. Though it is early to gauge its performance, The government should improve its infrastructure - BIS should increase registration of jewellery centres as collection centres, increase the awareness on tax benefits and interest rates offered, reach the rural and urban population through Business Correspondents to make this programme successful. The BIS willingness to complete the registration process of collection centres in 15 days is a good step forward.

Topic: Economic growth

6) According to a recent report, the idea that demand from a vast new middle class in countries like China and India was going to power the world economy appears to be in retreat. Define middle class in the Indian context and examine their size and importance in driving the economy. (200 Words)

As per Credit Swiss report the middle class person is defined as an adult having \$13700 of wealth which substantially lower in comparison to China,Brazil,Thailand, Russia and Malaysia which fall in \$18000 plus wealth category.

From Indian perspective as well,middle class is defined as some one who is living a comparatively comfortable life with reasonable food,shelter and clothes provided.Post 1991 the number of middle class has increased in India.Today India's middle class account for 3% of its population and there are only fewer people on its top.

How middle class drive the economy:-

Major consuming class

FDI and FII investment are majorly driven by middle class purchasing power.

Tax base for the economy.

Major working class.

Real demographic dividend of nation lies in middle class.

Backbone of economy due to its number.

Middle class of any country contributes the most in its growth. In India, post 2008 economy has slowed down and this class has been not growing at previous rate however with Make India, Skill India and proper support to MSME this segment can be augmented.

Also refer,

<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2015/11/26/6-according-recent-report-idea-demand-vast-new-middle-class-countries-like-china-india-going-power-world-economy-appears-retreat-define-middle-class/#comment-2379929500>

Topic: Energy; S&T

7) Concentrated solar thermal power (CSP), and the production of transport fuels through the gasification of biomass are said to be alternatives to coal for meeting the base-load demand for power. Discuss. (200 Words)

Base Load power sources:

These are power stations which can continuously generate electrical power to satisfy minimum demand of customers.

That demand is called "base load demand".

The typical base load power plants are either "coal fired" or "nuclear based".

Limitations of coal based plants:

- severe air pollution
- health hazards and implied mortality
- a significant role in global warming
- expropriation of poor from coal-bearing lands
- might face severe penalties in near future from the international community given the threat from global warming

CONCENTRATED SOLAR THERMAL POWER(CSP):

These use mirrors to concentrate the sun's light energy and convert it into heat to create steam to drive a turbine that generates electrical power.

ADVANTAGES:

- these can provide power 24 hours
- these are able to store the sun's energy for long periods at very little cost and with negligible loss.
- these can produce steam required for supercritical powerstations . Thus it makes it possible to feed the power directly into the existing power grid.

BIOMASS GASIFICATION:

It is the thermo-chemical conversion of biomass into a " combustible gas mixture".

It uses locally available biomass resources such as wood chips, rice husk, arhar stalks and other agro-residues.

ADVANTAGES:

- it can provide off-grid power for rural areas
- captive power generation for industries.
- Tail end grid connected power projects upto 20MW capacity.

Thus by adding CSP and bio-gassification based power supply to the existing power grid and eventual limiting the coal based power supply should be the ultimate envision for base load power supply.

Topic: Managing security

3) Critically evaluate national security reforms promised and implemented aftermath 26/11 terrorist attack on Mumbai. (200 Words)

Various Initiatives taken post-2008 Mumbai attacks:

1. NSG stations in metro cities.
2. Attempt to reduce multiplicity of forces operating at India's coastline and ensure better coordination.
3. Establishment of NIA to combat terror in India.
4. Modernization of police forces and improved training, Capacity building, security gear, cctv cameras and other logistic needs of law enforcement and intelligence agencies.
5. Better Intelligence sharing among various agencies.

Performance Evaluation:

1. Replacement of Coast guard with Navy post 2008 and re-haul of coastal security in 2011 was largely unsuccessful
2. Insufficient fund allocation which has resulted in inadequate implementation of reforms.
3. Lack of reforms in state police forces.
4. Vacancies in agencies like Intelligence Bureau etc.

Suggestions:

1. Immediate implementation of "Mega Policing Area plan"(2003) that includes helicopter based surveillance, e-surveillance
2. Need for NSG to be present in urban areas.
3. The need of the hour is to amend the charter of Coast guard and make it the sole designated agency for Coastal security and management.
4. Capacity building of law enforcement agencies, Police reforms(Prakash Singh vs UOI, 2006)
5. Aggressive human intelligence required. Ex- Eyes and Ears Scheme and Neighborhood watch scheme of Delhi police.

6. Better Centre-state coordination in Intelligence sharing and destruction of sleeper cells.
7. Provide training to people for any eventualities.

Topic: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate

4) The paramilitary forces, especially ITBP struggle to get the recognition they deserve and are considered as poor cousins to armed forces and elite civil services. Critically discuss. (200 Words)

The criticism against the emphasis on army over the Central Armed Police Forces can be seen in the following light:

- (i) Role - They perform a range of functions such as providing security in border areas, countering Naxalite activities etc which is as life-threatening as that of the army
- (ii) Career prospects – They are headed by IPS officers which curtails their career prospects
- (iii) Compensation – In spite of their sensitive security-related career, they have been assigned as civilian employees by the 7th Pay Commission and hence denied many of the benefits enjoyed by the army
- (iv) Distinction – Dead CAPF personnel are not prefixed with the title ‘Shaheed’ as it is the case for army
- (v) Public recognition – Achievements of the army are comparatively more glorified than the CAPF and hence they accrue greater public sympathy

However, the discrimination cannot be faulted entirely due to the following reasons –

- (i) Scope of profession – The army is the last resort of defence and often deployed in situation where the CAPF may not be equipped to handle
- (ii) Training – Army training is more rigorous compared to CAPF
- (iii) Recruitment – The CAPF are entirely recruited by the UPSC (unlike the armed forces in which only the military officers are) which justifies the fact that they are led by civilian officers

(iv) Career duration – Army jawans generally retire by the age of 42 while CAPF personnel retire at the age of 57-60

The 7th Pay Commission has recommended certain measures such as extending OROP conditions to CAPF and suffixing of dead CAPF personnel with 'Shaheed'. Accepting the recommendations will bring in parity between the two entities and end the controversies for good.

Topic: Economics of animal rearing; Pollution

6) Consumption of meat is dangerous both for humans and the planet.

Discuss. (200 Words)

Meat is an excellent source of protein and a complete diet with minerals, iron, vitamins and phosphorus. It is consumed by the fellow Indians to a large extent and is exported in large quantities (First in export of beef and fifth in export of chicken). It is a part of a non-veg diet all over the world.

But the adverse impacts meat has on humans and the environment cannot be overlooked.

In humans:

- 1) The major threat has been to the people who are involved in the production of meat rather than its consumption.
- 2) Has come into view by the WHO that processed meat is Class 1 carcinogen which has adverse impacts on consumption.
- 3) Increased cholesterol levels and hence higher heart attack rates plus the cancer issues has come into notice.
- 4) Meat processing uses high amount of antibiotics which slowly makes the microbes in human body immune to antibiotics.

Environment :

- 1) It releases huge amount of methane which is a major contributor to global warming.
- 2) Has its impacts on land availability, as it requires a larger area of land as compared to live-stocks.

3) Consumes vast quantity of water which is a scarce resource all over the world.

4) GHG released hence increased earth's temperature.

However, seeing the amount of carnitine that it has, and the amounts of lands it has used up a major switch to the livestock and other sources of protein can further pave the way to a more vulnerable strata of the society who are directly or indirectly dependent on meat production and consumption. So there is always a need to strike the cord in between.

Topic: Environmental pollution

7) Discuss the causes and, health, environmental and geopolitical implications of the recent episode of an oppressive smog (haze) that blanketed Southeast Asia. (200 Words)

Haze is a type of air pollution where dust, smoke and other dry particles obscure the clarity of the sky leading to various kinds of respiratory health diseases. With the rising cases of smog in the south-east Asia, the quality of air in this region has degraded to extreme levels of 400 PSI (pollutant standards index), a level that the World Health Organization (WHO) deems extremely hazardous.

The major causes that led to haze is continuous burning of hundreds of so-called hotspots, microsites where land is cleared using fires, for cultivation purposes or for growth of palm oil and timber for paper products. These burning happen mainly across Sumatra and Kalimantan provinces in Indonesia, which is being carried by South-east trade winds towards Singapore and Malaysia. Global event of El-Nino has also magnified the effects due to changing wind patterns during this period.

The effects of the haze are multiple and complex. It has precarious effects on health especially respiratory diseases like Asthama, Bronchial Cancer etc. This has led to extra burden on emergency services and hospitals; along with that losses due to the decline in tourism and travel and losses in productivity when firms and schools had to close.

On the other hand, this has become one of the causes of international disputes among neighbouring countries as happened between Singapore and Indonesia. Apart from that Transboundary Haze Pollution treaty, agreed by ASEAN countries, is still not being implemented on ground-levels.

Topic: Conservation; Environmental pollution

4) What do you understand by “carbon budget” in the climate change parlance? Examine why it is deemed important in ongoing climate change talks. (150 Words)

Carbon budget is the amount of carbon dioxide we can emit while still having a likely chance of limiting global temperature rise to 2°C above pre industrial levels. It is deemed important in ongoing climate talks because

1) according to 5th IPCC report by the end of 2011 we have already utilised more than 50% of carbon budget and if the same emission pattern continues it is likely to be exhausted within 3 decades.

2) rising sea levels, forest fires, extreme weather events like floods and droughts etc explain the importance of making carbon budget an important provision in Paris legal document.

But ongoing Paris talks may not witness any serious discussions on carbon budget because it has the potential to raise the issue of climate injustice done by developed countries to poor countries, complicated process of sharing the remaining budget between the developed and developing countries etc.

So the need of the hour is developing countries should put considerable amount of pressure to adopt carbon budget in the upcoming universal climate document to get their due legal share in the carbon budget.

Topic: Conservation; Environmental pollution

5) Examine the issues that have divided nations in the ongoing climate change negotiations. (200 Words)

In COP 21 more than 190 nations will gather in Paris to discuss a possible new global agreement on climate change, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the threat of climate change. But before this summit some major contentious issues have

divided nations in two parts- developing and developed nations. The major issues of contention are as follows:-

1) issue of common but differentiated responsibility:- this principle is not satisfying to all nations. Developing countries want developed nations to take more responsibility because of their major contribution in climate change due to early industrialisation. But developed nations oppose bringing historical contexts into climate discussion.

2) issue of financing:- poorer countries want the rich world to provide them financial help as their responsibility. But developed nations oppose any legal binding for it and want that after 2020 private sectors and international development banks such as world bank, to play a role.

3) technology transfer:- developing nations want technology from developed nations to meet their needs of clean energy but developed nations oppose to address the issues of IPR and technology transfer under this paris summit.

4) review mechanism:- what should be review mechanism is another issue. Whether the targets of all the nations should be reviewed for adequacy before implementing them or review should be done afterward to check only the conformity and progress of nations forwards their pre decided targets.

5) developed countries want at least a part if not the full target from each developing country to be enshrined unconditionally.

Thus number of issues are there between the two groups to resolve. It is difficult to get 195 countries to agree on specific solution to deal with climate change. But these issues can permanently resolve only by consensus. It is the best way to guaranteeing fairness.

Topic: changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

6) India is nudging semi-regulated markets like Myanmar and Kenya to accept its drug standards, instead of the US or British norms. Discuss the objectives of this policy. (150 Words)

India is one of largest exporters of pharmaceutical products to Africa , Asia and even to the western countries. But the drugs exported by India to these countries are of the standards of US and UK. This imposes additional cost of packaging and other costs on indian pharmaceutical companies.

Pharmaceutical export promotion council of india (Pharmexcil) has been trying to nudge the semi regulated markets of African and Asian countries to accept indian drug standards instead of US and UK. The objective of this policy are

- 1) making indian pharma companies competitive in the international market with cost effective indian standards.
- 2) it would relieve the pressure on indian pharmacopeia to upgrade itself to costly US and UK standards.
- 3) it would earn valuable foreign exchange to India.
- 4) encourage indian pharma industry and health sector

But convincing these countries is not an easy process. Explaining the benefits of its low cost effective medicines to the regulatory heads of these countries, inviting them to visit indian pharma companies , organising conferences to build confidence, diplomatic follow up of entire process etc should be carried out to tap these markets.