9pm Compilation

February, 2021 (Fourth Week)

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General Studies 3

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General Studies

Studies

Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Impacts of School Closures and way forward
Source: The Hindu
Syllabus: GS 2: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.
Synopsis: Policies to deliver education during COVID-led school closures has increased the disparities. Disparities need to be rectified by suitable policy measures to deliver universal education to all.

Background
- Lockdown measures to contain COVID spread has forced the government to resort to school closures.
- The governments tried to address the situation by giving a push to the digital distance learning method.
- However, studies indicate that the initiative failed to take into account existing divides such as spatial, **digital, gender and class.**
- The digital learning methods widened the digital divide between the rich and the poor and the urban and rural areas.

What were the steps taken by the government?
- The government used various means such as text/video/audio content through SMS, WhatsApp, radio and TV programmes to reach out to students and engage them.
- Further, the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development in March 2020 started sharing the following free e-learning platforms.

1.Diksha portal: It contains e-learning content aligned to the curriculum
2. e-Pathshala: It is an app by the National Council of Educational Research and Training for Classes 1 to 12 in multiple languages
3. **SWAYAM:** It consists of 1,900 complete courses including teaching videos, computer weekly assignments, examinations and credit transfers, aimed both at school (Classes 1 to 12) and higher education.
4. **SWAYAM Prabha:** It is a group of 32 direct to home channels devoted to the telecasting of educational programmes

What are the issues concerning the use of digital distance learning method?
The attempts at initiating a rapid transition to digital learning following the pandemic have many lessons,
1. **First,** according to a recent **UNICEF report**, the massive school closures exposed the uneven distribution of technology required for **remote learning.** It reduced the chances of **social and economic mobility** through education.
2. **Second,** it also disrupted the significant school programmes that resulted in high enrollment as well as regular attendance. (The mid-day meal scheme, the school health Programme and pre-matric scholarships to girl children).
3. **Third,** the abilities of the families and communities to support their children's education reduced. For example, A survey promoted by the **Centre for Budget and**

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Policy Studies found that in families which faced cash and food shortages, only 50% of the boys and girls were confident of returning to school.

4. **Fourth,** students with lesser access to digital connectivity forced them to share the burden of household chores. Also, their educational routine disrupted. In many cases, students don't remember what they learnt earlier.

5. **Fifth,** apart from the above issues the education sector faced many challenges. Such as delivery of pedagogical processes, classroom assessment frameworks, students' support and teacher-student engagement.

Case study of Rajasthan:

▪ Rajasthan has a low literacy rate in India. It is the 2nd worst in overall literacy rate and worst in female literacy rate. (**NSS,2017-18).**

▪ 20% of girls in the age group 15-16 were out of school against the national average of 13.5 (**Annual Status of Education Report 2018**).

▪ Despite pioneering initiatives in education such as the **Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi** projects, it suffers from systemic issues in education related to quality, equity and gender.

▪ In Rajasthan, the access of girls to education during the COVID-19 period was limited to 11%. Girls who had online access reported links through WhatsApp (92%) and YouTube (12%).

▪ The reasons for students inability to access online education were lack of devices, poor or no internet connectivity, and also girls' preoccupation with household activity.

▪ In contrast, the schools run by NGO's performed better. They did not resort to online education. Instead, teachers visited individual students at home and also taught children in small groups.

What needs to be done?

▪ **First**, Education planning should be made context-specific, gender-responsive and inclusive.

▪ **Second, the** government should take enabling measures even when schools are closed. Such as;
  ▪ providing access to online education,
  ▪ removal of barriers in pre-matric scholarships and
  ▪ ensuring the provision of mid-day meals, iron and folic acid tablets and
  ▪ provision of personal hygiene products to girl students

▪ **Third,** currently, there are around 300 million children reported to be out of school in India across all age groups. This number can increase once schools will reopen.
  ▪ Hence, the authorities should establish the re-enrolment of children as mandated by the **National Education Policy 2020. Mass outreach programmes** should be developed with **civil society** to encourage re-enrollment**.**

▪ **Fourth,** to retain the poorest at schools' remedial tuitions and counselling along with scholarships, targeted cash transfers and other entitlements are advisable.

▪ **Fifth,** we can also think about making secondary education for girls free.

▪ **Finally,** to implement all these measures we need to support the education sector with adequate budgetary resources**.** Hence, it is important to increase the share of education to 6% of GDP, as emphasized by the President of India.

2. The trend of Undermining the Role of Upper House
Source: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GH88A6BJ6.1&imageview=0

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Syllabus: GS 2 – Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges, and issues arising out of these

Synopsis: The ruling party who dominates the lower house is sometimes seen undermining the role of the Upper House. Such an approach dilutes the principle of bicameralism and undermines the spirit of the Constitution.

Background:
- The recent passage of the **Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill** in Karnataka's legislative council has attracted criticism.
- The reason for criticism is that the **bill was passed through a voice vote** in place of a division vote as demanded by the opposition.
- The opposition parties had a majority and didn't support the bill. This has created an impression that the bill was passed without majority support.

Instruments to undermine the Upper House:
- **First**, the use of **voice vote** undermines the higher number of opposition members in the upper house. In this process, the presiding officer gives a decision as per his judgment, because the names or numbers of legislators voting on each side are not recorded.
  - A similar thing was seen in the passing of controversial farm laws by Rajya Sabha in 2020.
- **Second**, the presiding officer sometimes declares a bill as a '**Money Bill'** even if it is not covered under the definition of a money bill.
  - As the second house can only give recommendations on it and can't stop its passage.
  - For Example, Aadhaar, electoral bonds, retrospective validation of foreign political contribution, etc. passed as money bills.
- **Third**, the government **promulgates the ordinance** and frequently re-promulgates it.
  - This is an abuse of temporary legislative power given to the executive who tries to give it permanency by re-promulgation.
  - The objective is to forbid the second house from performing its constitutional role as the majority is already enjoyed in the lower house.

Role of Upper House:
- **First**, it gives **credible second opinions** on bills introduced by the ruling party in the lower house.
- **Second**, to **prevent** the country from the **brute will of the majority** of one party in the lower house. This becomes crucial as even the courts are barred from intervening in the legislative process.
- **Third**, it **duly represents the interests of states** at the national level. Rajya Sabha is representative of all the Indian states.
- **Fourth**, it **upholds the principle of separation of powers** in a robust way. The majority of the executive is often chosen from lok sabha by the ruling party. This allows the executive domination over the legislature and easily passes bills in Lok Sabha.

Way Forward:
- The speaker/chairman of the house must act in the spirit of positive morality. It would allow him to function objectively.

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2. **Second, the government should strengthen fuel efficiency** requirements for new passenger cars and commercial vehicles. Two-wheelers are not subject to any fuel efficiency standards even when they consume two-third of the petrol used in India.
   - A target of 50% reduction in fuel consumption by 2-wheelers may result in innovations, such as increasing efficiency of internal combustion engine (ICE) efficiency and increase in electric driven two-wheelers.
3. **Third, similar steps should be applied to the passenger vehicle** and heavy-duty commercial vehicle. Consumers who switch to electric vehicles will save even more money as electricity is cheaper compared to petrol and diesel.

What are the steps taken by the government?
1. The **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) was launched.** However, the **NEMMP mainly focused on hybrid electric vehicles** and most incentives went towards subsidizing mild hybrids instead of electric vehicles.
2. Heavy-duty vehicles, which consume nearly 60% diesel, are now subject to fuel efficiency standards.
3. **The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) scheme** now focuses largely on electric vehicles.
   - **The FAME scheme** focuses on two- and three-wheelers, taxis, and buses. It should be extended to all passenger cars, commercial vehicles, and to agricultural tractors.
4. **Introducing complementary policies** like stepping up investments in charging infrastructure is essential. The GST rates for all passenger vehicles could be made proportional to their fuel efficiency level.

Conclusion
- Adopting strict fuel efficiency standards and a ZEV program by 2024 can result in India's petroleum demand peaking by 2030. By that, the government can save money for the consumer while enhancing long-term energy security by wielding the regulatory tools at its disposal.
- Thus, it is time for India to adopt stringent fuel efficiency standards and a zero-emissions vehicle program.

6. PM Modi's acknowledgement of role of private sector
Source: The Indian Express
Syllabus: GS 3 -Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth
Synopsis: Future growth in India should be led by the private sector. The government should encourage the private sector as a central part of its strategy.
Introduction
Recently the Prime Minister acknowledged the role of the private sector. Now it is up to the private sector to grow their business, pursue excellence, follow the law of the land and pay taxes.

Why the role of the private sector is critical in India?
- **India has limited capital and the private sector is the best provider of capital** in the economy. The private sector will deliver the most benefit in terms of growth or return on capital employed.
- **Private sector focus on wealth creation.** The PM also praised the wealth creators with a logic that if you can't create wealth, you won't be able to distribute it. The creation of wealth is essential for growth, employment and the reduction of poverty.

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- India's **successes in many fields linked to the private sectors**. Sectors such as banks, airlines, insurance, telecom, IT services, IT-enabled services etc were created a huge growth after they have been open up to private players.

What can be expected from PM speech?
The Prime Minister's speech has raised the expectations that more positive reform for the private sector is around the corner.

- **First,** the government can now bring in **policy and future economic reforms** in India as it has recognised the private sector's role in parliament.
- **Second,** India has been **making worthy steps in the Ease of Doing Business.** It is easier now to start a business in India than it was a decade ago. A government willing to listen gives a good head start to solving those problems.
- **Third, the success of the Mudra Yojana and Start-up India** has proven the new wave of innovation and enterprise in young India. India is now willing to look at other sectors such as space, defence, aeronautics etc.
- **Fourth,** Private involvement in the **India stack** (Stack is a combination of technological projects that comprises all the technologies required to operate for any particular sector) has revolutionised the fintech sector. Now the digital health stack will likely to do the same for the health tech sector.

Suggestions:

- The private sector should now follow the law of the land and pay taxes. They should also become good corporate citizens of India or else the mistrust of the private sector might affect the sector.
- The upcoming entrepreneurs will be the strong foundations of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The recent Union Budget has made it clear that the government will pursue economic reform and go for growth.

7. New Social Media Code – A much needed one for India
Source: The Indian Express
Syllabus: GS-3: role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges
Synopsis: The new Social media code is much-needed to ensure the online platforms are subject to law of the land
Introduction:
Recently, the government introduced the Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. The rules have the potential to transform the online media platforms to fit into the Indian ecosystem.

Few salient provisions in the New Social Media Code:

1. The OTT platforms together have to **enact a code for self-regulation.** Further, the OTT platforms also **have to classify the content**. So that, an underage minor will not be able to view the adult contents.
2. The new social media code creates a **three-tier grievance redressal mechanism**.
   - **First-tier**: The **publishers** of social media have to **appoint officers** to redress their grievances. These officers have to ensure the time-bound disposal of grievances.
   - A **self-regulating body** headed by a retired judge will be at the **Second-tier**.
   - The Central government **oversight committee** will be in the **third tier**.
3. All the **grievances have to be resolved within the framework of India's laws**. Recently, Twitter disobeyed government rules. After the implementation of New social media codes, social media have to obey the government's directions.

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Why do India need New Social Media Code?
1. The policy will **create a level playing field** in two important things.
   o Between the online news platforms and print media
   o Between the online news platforms and television news media.
2. The new social media rules will **bring in the online news portals within the ambit of the code of ethics**. It is a much-needed step considering the recklessness and irresponsibility shown by some of the digital media platforms.
3. Further, the new social media rules **aim to achieve oversight responsibilities.** Like the film certification agency for Cinema, the social media platforms have to **ensure a content classification.**
4. The new social media codes will **ensure freedom of speech to the artists.** This is achieved through **self-regulation**. Social media platforms can provide more freedom for artists to create content. Since they are the ones going to regulate it, they can classify the content of artists instead of banning them like other media (film, print, etc).

What are the global lessons for digital media platforms in self-regulation?
1. **Lessons from Australia:** In Australia, Digital companies have drafted a code to deal with fake news and disinformation. This is called the **Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation.** The code has few important provisions including the removal of content and disabling the content from the digital platforms.
2. **Lessons from the UK:** The UK government has proposed an **"Online Safety Bill".** The Bill aims to deal heavily on digital platforms that promote violence, child abuse, terrorist material, cyber bullying, etc.

Conclusion:
The New social media code has the necessary provisions to ensure free speech. At the same time, it will regulate and stop social media companies from violating the law of the land.

8. Draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020
Source: The Hindu
Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology- developments
Synopsis: The draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 has the potential to transform the science and research in India.
Introduction:
The government introduced a draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 in January 2021. The draft policy aims to address the issues in the past four science and technology policies.

Evolution of Science, Technology and Innovation Policies in India:
Right after independence, India realised the value of science in promoting the welfare of people. So far, India has released four policies in Science. These are:
1. **The Scientific Policy Resolution, 1958**
   o The policy aimed to lay the foundation of scientific temper and develop scientific enterprises around India.
   o The policy led to the establishment of many research institutes and national laboratories across India.
   o **Achievement of the policy**: By the end of 1980, India developed advanced scientific infrastructure along with sufficient scientific personnel.
2. **The Science and Technology Policy Statement, 1983**
   o This policy aimed to achieve **technological self-reliance.** The policy also aimed to use technology to benefit all sections of society.

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o   The policy aimed to strengthen the research in fields such as biotechnology and electronics.

3. **The Science and Technology Policy, 2003**
    o   This is the first Science Policy in India after the economic reforms in 1991.
    o   This policy aimed to increase investment in research and development. The policy brought India's investment in research to 0.7% of GDP.
    o   During this policy only, the **Scientific and Engineering Research Board** (SERB) was **established in India** to promote research.

4. **The Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, 2013**
    o   This policy **brought innovation** into the science and technology policy.
    o   The policy aimed to make India as one of the top five global scientific leaders in the world.
    o   India achieved this by the following steps
        •   The Centre built partnerships with State governments,
        •   The government established more research and development centres throughout India
        •   India collaborated in international research projects such as **the Neutrino research**, **Large Hadron Collider,** etc.

What are the outcomes of these four scientific policies?

The US-based National Science Foundation released a report. The report highlighted the outcomes of the policies. They are

1. **Achievement of Policies:**
    ▪   India was the third-largest publisher of peer-reviewed science and engineering journal articles and conference papers.
    ▪   India achieved this milestone at the pace of a 10.73% annual growth rate from 2008. This is higher than the growth rate of China (7.81%).

2. **Where do the policies lack?**
    ▪   India's index score was very low in Highly Cited Articles of the world. India has a score of 0.7. This is lower than the US, China and the EU.
    ▪   India's **Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) is only 0.6% of GDP**. This is very low as compared to the U.S. and China (their GERD is greater than 2%).
    ▪   According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) report, **India only filed 2053 patents in 2019**. On the other hand, China filed 58,990 patents and the US filed 57,840 patents.

How India aimed to tackle the drawbacks?

The government aimed to tackle the drawbacks holistically by releasing a new science and technology policy. The government released the **draft of the fifth Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 (STIP 2020)** in January 2021

Salient provisions of Draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020:

1. The draft STIP **aims to double the following things every 5 years.**
    1. Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers
    2. Private sector contribution to the GERD
    3. Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD)

2. Apart from that the draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy also aim to **get India into the top three scientific superpowers of the world within a decade**.

3. The draft STIP 2020 also **defined the Open Science Framework.** The framework will **provide pan India access to all scientific journals**. This will be achieved by creating a **"one nation, one subscription"**.

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4. The draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy will **improve Private sector participation**. This will be achieved by a strategy. Under it, the State governments will fund the research. The Private will participate in it. The government will provide fiscal incentives. Further, the government will also support innovation in the MSME sector.
5. The other focus areas of the draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy are:
    1. The provision for **supporting indigenous knowledge** systems in India
    2. The draft STIP provide steps to **improve artificial intelligence**
    3. The policy will encourage the **participation of Indian scientific diaspora**
    4. The policy will set up a **special fund for research** known as the **strategic technology development fund.**

Conclusion:

The draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy looks good on paper and also has the potential to transform the entire science, technology and innovation in India. But the actual results will occur only if the **government fulfil its role as the primary funder of research and encourage the private sector**.

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