

SMART ABHYAS

CURRENT AFFAIRS MONTHLY

MARCH 2019

THE ICE STUPAS OF LADAKH

They are man-made glaciers which freeze and hold water that keeps flowing and wasting away down the streams and into the rivers throughout the winter. Instead, this ice will melt in the springtime, just when the fields need watering.

INCLUDES

Daily Quiz Compilation of
March 2019

Rajya Sabha TV and Lok
Sabha TV compilations

All India Radio Spotlight
Analysis

Dear aspirants

A note from Smart Abhyas



Smart Abhyas

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WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING TO IMPROVE

Any suggestions that would help us enhance the quality of our content, the presentation of our content or anything important for that matter can be brought to us by mailing us at smartabhyas@gmail.com.

TELL A FRIEND

It would mean the world to us if you think that the content we are providing is worthwhile and spread the word to fellow aspirants out there.

Polity and Social Issues

1. Cabinet approves National Policy on Software Products 2019
2. National Mineral Policy, 2019 approved by Cabinet
3. Social protection and India's future
4. Theyyam and Kaavu: Nature and culture intertwined beautifully
5. A new low: 15 of the 20 world's most polluted cities are in India
6. Making elections fair and transparent
7. India's Official Secrets Act: What you need to know
8. Cabinet approves Flood Management and Border Areas Programme (FMBAP)
9. Renewable Status for Large Hydro Power Projects
10. Model Code of Conduct
11. Rani ki Vav: What you need to know
12. Dongria Kondh tribe: What you need to know
13. Low rate of adoption for government's twin-pit toilet system
14. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013: What you need to know
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16. Rabhas of Assam
17. India ranks 76th on WEF global Energy Transition index
18. Government notifies Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules 2019
19. Election Commission of India : What you need to know
20. Anti-defection law : What you need to know
21. Turing Award: The Nobel's equivalent in the field of Computing

Geography, Ecology and Biodiversity

1. Asian Rhino Range Countries Meeting
2. Marigold and tomato: A match made in heaven
3. Erode turmeric gets GI tag
4. Purple frogs and river streams
5. Indian Sundarbans is the newest Indian Wetland of International Importance
6. Wind energy on the decline in India
7. Islands in the Pacific
8. Insect population on the edge
9. Geographical Indication Tag for Sirsi Supari
10. Human impact on other species
11. Starry dwarf frog discovered
12. 6th edition of The Global Environment Outlook (GEO)
13. Heat waves and their effect on urban and non-urban areas
14. Bumpy road ahead for the Bumphead parrotfish
15. Mass nesting of olive ridley turtles
16. The connection between Northeast monsoon and El Niño
17. India's emissions increased in 2018
18. Marine life threatened by global warming
19. The tomb of Itimad-Ud-Daula

Economy

1. RBI, Bank of Japan sign Bilateral Swap Arrangement
2. National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)
3. Maldives sign agreement with Exim Bank to finance new government's infrastructure projects
4. Post sale subsidy disbursal: What you need to know
5. RBI to inject liquidity via forex swaps
6. Government exceeds disinvestment target for FY19
7. Discount broking
8. FinTech : What you need to know
9. Second joint logistics node operational at Navy base in Mumbai
10. Blockchain-based Coffee e-marketplace

Government Schemes and Initiatives

1. Cabinet approves "Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN yojana"
2. 'FAME India Phase II' given the nod
3. Electric two-wheelers: The opportunity and the challenges associated with them
4. Young Scientist Programme
5. Amendment in Hazardous Waste (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016
6. National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP)
7. Swachh Survekshan 2019 Awards
8. Atal Innovation Mission to be continued
9. India Cooling Action Plan launched
10. Star rating programme launched for Microwave Ovens and Washing Machines

Science and Technology

1. Novel 'upcycling' process to give plastic second life
2. Electronic surveillance of Indo-Bangla border
3. Belle II experiment: What you need to know
4. Fracking: All you need to know
5. Rock nitrogen
6. New solar-powered device creates water from thin air
7. India's Scorpene class submarines
8. West Nile Fever: What you need to know
9. Japan to make a crater on asteroid
10. NASA discovers pulsar speeding through space
11. Ice stupas of Ladakh
12. India's TB woes continue
13. NASA's OSIRIS REx
14. India's Anti-Satellite Missile Test
15. Muons

International Relations, Summits and Meetings

1. Russia now presses pause on Intermediate-Range Nuclear treaty with US
2. India likely to be terminated as a beneficiary of USA's Generalized System of Preferences
3. India and France team up to set up a Maritime Surveillance System
4. India gets first TIR shipment via Chabahar Port
5. India at number 2 in arms import during 2014-2018
6. Cabinet approves proposal for accession of India to various international agreements

7. European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

8. India to take part in SCO joint anti-terrorism exercise in 2019

9. Golan Heights

10. Exchange of country by country reports between India and the United States of America

18. Africa-India Field Training Exercise AFINDEX-19

19. India's First Lokpal

20. Kazakhstan renames Astana as Nursultan after ex-president

21. 33rd edition India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (Ind-Indo Corpat)

Point Blank (Facts for prelims)

1. Gram Samridhi Yojana

2. Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019

3. Poshan Pakhwada

4. DRDO chairman wins missile systems award

5. Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) scheme

6. SWAGAT-Automatic Fare Collection Gating System to the nation

7. Al Nagah 2019

8. 12-edged Rs 20 coin for the first time

9. Malaysia joins the International Criminal Court

10. Exercise Red Flag 2019

11. Google Bolo: Reader-Tutor App

12. Rebate on Embedded taxes for Garments Exports

13. Pinaka guided weapons system successfully test fired

14. US – India Strategic Security Dialogue held in Washington

15. Cyclone Idai hits Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe

16. RBI names SBI, ICICI and HDFC as systemically important banks

17. UNlocking NATional Energy Efficiency potential (UN-NATEE)

Polity and Social Issues

1. Rights of Forest Dwellers Act
2. Mercer's 'Quality of Living Index' -2019
3. SDG India Index

Geography, Ecology and Biodiversity

1. Vultures in India
2. Dwarf Frog

Science and Technology

1. Electronic surveillance of Indo-Bangladesh Border
2. Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)
3. HIV
4. Military satellites
5. World Wide Web
6. Star Gate observatory Sariska
7. Ground water system on Mars
8. Advanced Fingerprint Test
9. DotBook
10. Technology development fund

All India Radio

1. 10% reservation for economically weaker sections in J & K
2. UN Security Council
3. Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana
4. A discussion on World Consumer Rights Day
5. Election Commission of India
6. A discussion on Joint Military operation by India and Myanmar

Polity and Social Issues

Cabinet approves National Policy on Software Products 2019

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **National Policy on Software Products 2019** to develop India as a Software Product Nation.

Expenditure involved

- Initially, an outlay of Rs.1500 Crore has been provided for implementing the programmes/ schemes envisaged under this policy over a period of 7 years.
- Rs. 1500 Crore is divided into Software Product Development Fund (SPDF) and Research and Innovation Fund.

Implementation strategy and targets:

- The Policy will lead to the formulation of several schemes, initiatives, projects and measures for the development of Software products sector in the country as per the roadmap envisaged therein.
- Further, the Policy aims to align with other Government initiatives such as Start-up India, Make in India and Digital India, Skill India, so as to create an Indian Software products Industry of USD ~70-80 billion with direct and indirect employment of ~3.5 million by 2025.

To achieve the vision of NPSP-2019, the Policy has the following five Missions:

- **To promote the creation of a sustainable Indian software product industry**, driven by intellectual property (IP), leading to a ten-fold increase in India share of the Global Software product market by 2025.
- **To nurture 10,000 technology startups in the software product industry**, including 1000 such technology startups in Tier-II and Tier-III towns and cities and generating direct and indirect employment for 3.5 million people by 2025.

- **To create a talent pool for software product industry** through (i) up-skilling of 1,000,000 IT professionals, (ii) motivating 100,000 school and college students and (iii) generating 10,000 specialized professionals that can provide leadership.
- **To build a cluster-based innovation-driven ecosystem** by developing 20 sectoral and strategically located software product development clusters having integrated ICT infrastructure, marketing, incubation, R&D/testbeds and mentoring support.
- In order to evolve and monitor schemes and programmes for the implementation of this policy, **National Software Products Mission** will be set up with participation from Government, Academia and Industry.

Background:

- The Indian IT Industry has predominantly been a service Industry. However, a need has been felt to move up the value chain through technology-oriented products and services.
- To create a robust software product ecosystem the Government has approved the National Policy on Software Products 2019, which aims to develop India as the global software product hub, driven by innovation, improved commercialisation, sustainable Intellectual Property (IP), promoting technology startups and specialized skill sets.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements with reference to National Policy on Software Products 2019

1. Aims to promote the creation of a sustainable Indian software product industry, driven by intellectual property (IP), leading to a ten-fold increase in India share of the Global Software product market by 2025
2. Envisages to set up National Software Products Mission to oversee the implementation of the Policy

Which of the above mentioned statements are true ?

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both are true d) Both are false

Solution: c

National Mineral Policy, 2019 approved by Cabinet

The Union Cabinet has approved the National Mineral Policy 2019.

Objectives of the NMP 2019:

- The aim of National Mineral Policy 2019 is to have a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices.

The National Mineral Policy 2019 includes provisions which will give a boost to the mining sector in areas such as

- introduction of Right of First Refusal for RP/PL (re-connaissance permit cum Prospective Licensing and Mining Lease) holders,
- encouraging the private sector to take up exploration,
- auctioning in virgin areas for composite RP cum PL cum ML on a revenue share basis,
- encouragement of merger and acquisition of mining entities
- transfer of mining leases and creation of dedicated mineral corridors to boost private sector mining areas

More on the NMP 2019:

- The 2019 Policy proposes to grant the status of an industry to mining activity to boost the financing of mining for the private sector and for acquisitions of mineral assets in other countries by private sector.

- It also mentions that Long term import-export policy for minerals will help the private sector in better planning and stability in business
- The Policy also mentions rationalization of reserved areas given to PSUs which have not been used and to put these areas to auction, which will give more opportunity to the private sector for participation
- The Policy also mentions making efforts to harmonize taxes, levies and royalty with world benchmarks to help the private sector
- Among the changes introduced in the National Mineral Policy, 2019 include the focus on Make in India initiative and Gender sensitivity in terms of the vision.
- In so far as the regulation in Minerals is concerned, E-Governance, IT-enabled systems, awareness and Information campaigns have been incorporated.
- Regarding the role of the state in mineral development, an online public portal with provision for generating triggers at a higher level in the event of delay of clearances has been put in place.
- NMP 2019 aims to attract private investment through incentives while the efforts would be made to maintain a database of mineral resources and tenements under mining tenement systems.
- The new policy focusses on using coastal waterways and inland shipping for evacuation and transportation of minerals and encourages dedicated mineral corridors to facilitate the transportation of minerals.
- Utilization of the **district mineral fund** for equitable development of project affected persons and areas.
- The 2019 Policy also introduces the **concept of Inter-Generational Equity** that deals with the well-being not only of the present generation but also of the generations to come.
- NMP 2019 also proposes to constitute an inter-ministerial body to institutionalize the mechanism for ensuring sustainable development in mining.

Background:

- National Mineral Policy 2019 replaces the **National Mineral Policy 2008**.

- A committee in 2017 under the chairmanship of **Dr K Rajeswara Rao**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines was constituted to review NMP 2008 and formulate a new National Mineral Policy, which has now been accepted and made official.

Social protection and India's future

- India is no longer largely chronically poor; **it is now more unequal and vulnerable with pockets of deep poverty**. Its future shared prosperity will depend to a large extent on how its social protection system evolves and catches up with its diversity and demography.

Social protection system

- A steady, safe, well-paid job is the best protection against economic hardship. But when this ideal situation is not possible, social protection programs help people become more resilient to risks. Typically, a comprehensive social protection system requires three types of instruments to work together.
- First, **promotional instruments** invest in the ability of families to survive shocks on their own — by enhancing productivity, access to job opportunities and incomes through human capital infrastructure, wage legislation, labour policies, skills training and livelihood interventions.
- Second, **preventive instruments** aim to reduce the impacts of shocks before they occur by enabling households to use their savings from good times to tackle losses in tough times. This is mainly done through social insurance programs.
- Third, **protective instruments** mitigate the impacts of shocks after they have occurred through tax-financed redistribution from the non-poor to the poor. These programs would classically be called anti-poverty measures as they target social assistance or safety net programs to the poor or destitute, whether in kind or cash.

How it all started and how it has changed

- When social protection schemes were created in India after Independence, most of the country was reeling from famine, de-industrialisation and multiple deprivations.

- Half the population was chronically poor, the country had an aggregate food deficit, financial and banking networks were underdeveloped, growth rates were weak, and technology available for program administration was rudimentary. Therefore, India's policymakers focussed almost exclusively on anti-poverty, protective instruments.

- But that India no longer exists, and the country's social protection system needs to evolve and catch up with the needs of its new demography and risk profile. Analysis of the latest available data from 2012 highlight three stylised facts that are important to guide this evolution.

- First, **despite the fall in households below the poverty line to 22%, the challenge of chronic poverty remains**. Despite a decline in poverty levels, India shelters pockets of deep poverty and these households are geographically clustered.

- A significant 15% of households that were poor in 2005 remained poor in 2012. That's 37 million households.

- Second, **inequality across locations and demographic groups has increased**. The poverty rate of six of the poorest states in the country is twice that of other states. Seven low-income states — Chhattisgarh, MP, UP, Odisha, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Bihar account for 45% of India's population but nearly 62% of its poor — continue to need strong safety nets programs. Within states, poverty and vulnerability remain highest amongst Adivasis. Women are largely missing from the workforce, and face serious risks to their mobility and well-being.

- Third, the majority of India is no longer poor. Instead, half of India is vulnerable. These are households that have recently escaped poverty with consumption levels that are precariously close to the poverty line and remain vulnerable to slipping back. Programs must ensure that those who've escaped poverty are able to sustain improvements.

- As families move out of poverty and the middle class grows, social protection programs can no longer be singularly focused on chronically poor households.

- In 2016, while traditional safety nets such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) expended \$16 billion, the life and accident insurance programs spent less than \$16 million together.

- **Programs such as PDS and MGNREGS still constitute half of the social protection spending in the country.**
- It's critical that programs help those vulnerable to poverty to anticipate and manage risks and shocks better, not only attempt to provide aid to relieve deprivations experienced by the poor.
- **Three types of portable tools are needed to prevent the newly vulnerable class from falling back into poverty and debt traps — health insurance, social insurance (in case of death, accident and other calamities) and pensions.**
- Portability is key to ensure migrants receive support while they try to build new lives in new places, as state governments often use residency criteria to target benefits.
- **At present, only 4% of households in India use government social insurance programs.** Use of private sources of insurance is higher, particularly for wealthy households.
- Recent policies have taken steps in the right direction. The boost in crop insurance, new pension plans for the elderly, the rise in contributory pensions for those who have the wherewithal to save, and larger coverage of health insurance programs will help India re-balance its social protection architecture to match the needs of the rising numbers of its vulnerable people.
- However, the need to re-balance the mix of programs between protection and prevention may not require a dramatic change in the current umbrella social protection budget. Given the huge diversity in the economic profile of India's states, a variety of approaches will be called for.
- For instance, the needs of the rising middle class with access to private insurance markets in Delhi and Maharashtra will differ markedly from the needs of poorer states such as UP and Bihar.
- Delhi should be enabled to spend its centrally allocated social protection resources differently from UP. **In states where many poor and vulnerable households are still not able to save enough to insure themselves against crises or times of high prices, social assistance will remain a core intervention.**
- In low-income states, anti-poverty programs such as PDS or MGNREGS, if implemented well, can serve twin goals of protection and prevention by ensuring India's vulnerable don't become poor, and that the poor live with dignity during times of drought or food price inflation.
- Effective safety nets can dramatically reduce the number of poor and the likelihood that poverty will be transmitted from one generation to the next. Strengthening their delivery systems is key while allowing state governments to choose the optimal mix of preventive and protective programs to suit their state's needs within an umbrella social protection budget.
- If insurance coverage is adequate and expands, many families would not need to rely on safety net transfers in the face of old age or health crises which would otherwise push households into long-term poverty and debt traps. Thus, an increased emphasis on interventions that help anticipate risks should be expected, particularly in medium- and high-growth states.