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Draft National Education Policy Unveiled

Committee led by Dr K. Kasturirangan presented **New Draft of National Education Policy**.

The Draft Policy is built on foundational pillars of **Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability**.

Key Recommendations

- **Sanskrit at all levels of education:** Sanskrit should be taught at all levels of **school and higher education** as one of the optional languages on par with all Schedule 8 languages.
 - Sanskrit textbooks at the Foundational and Middle school level may be rewritten in **Simple Standard Sanskrit (SSS)** in order to teach **Sanskrit through Sanskrit (STS)**.
- **Extension of the Right To Education (RTE) Act:** RTE, which currently applies to classes I to VIII, will now be applicable to the entire school system from pre-school to class XII.
 - It will cover children of ages 3 to 18 (**preschool to senior secondary level**).
- **Restructuring of school curriculum and 5+3+3+4 design:** Under the proposed 5+3+3+4 design
 - The first five years of schooling of children in the age group of 3 to 8 years would be marked as **Foundational Stage** (it includes three years of pre-primary plus **grade 1 and grade 2**).
 - The next three years of schooling, to be marked as a **Preparatory Stage** for the children in the age group of 8 to 11 years (will include **grades 3 to 5**).
 - **Middle Stage (grades 6 to 8)** for the students in the age group of 11-14 years.
 - **Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12)** for students in the age group of 14-18 years.
- Schools will be re-organized into **school complexes**.
- **System for flexible and multiple board examinations:** Introduction of a **semester**

system in school education for students of classes 10 to 12, with provisions for holding "**flexible and modular board examinations**".

- Students will be able to take a board examination in a given subject in whichever semester they take the corresponding class in school, whenever they feel most ready.
 - They should be able to take any such subject board examination again if they feel they can study and do better.
 - **Restructuring of the higher education institutions:** by placing them under three categories:
 - The first primarily being focussed on **research**.
 - Second providing **high-quality teaching** across disciplines with significant contribution to research.
 - Third providing **quality teaching focussed on undergraduate education**.
 - It also suggests the introduction of **four-year undergraduate programmes** in higher education institutions and restructuring of the current 3-year BA, Bsc, B Com and B Voc programmes with provisions to provide students with "**multiple exit and entry options**".
 - **Establishment of a Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (National Education Commission):** as a constitutional body through an Act of Parliament, with the **Prime Minister** being its Chairperson.
 - Rajya Shiksha Ayog/State Education Commissions may be constituted in each state.
 - **Establishment of one higher education regulator—National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA)—** that will subsume all other bodies like UGC, AICTE and others into it.
 - **A national programme for the professional development** of faculty members of the higher education institutions.
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UN-Habitat Assembly

India is elected to the Executive Board of the first **UN-Habitat Assembly** at the Plenary Session of the Assembly being held in **Nairobi**.

- **The theme:** for the UN-Habitat Assembly is "**Innovation for Better Quality of Life in Cities and Communities**".
- **UN-Habitat:** is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future. Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.
 - **Mandated** by the **UN General Assembly in 1978** to address the issues of urban growth, it is a knowledgeable institution on urban development processes and understands the aspirations of cities and their residents.

The outcome of the UN-Habitat Assembly

- **Contributions:** of more than \$152 million towards making cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, by the member countries.
- Communities, cities or towns that improve their solid waste management and reduce their waste management expenditure will be publicly recognised as **'Waste-Wise Cities'**.

The initiative asks communities, cities and towns around the world to **"rethink, reduce, recycle, refuse and reuse waste"**.

- The **strategic plan** of the UN human settlements programme for the period 2020–2025 is presented. The plan aims to advance sustainable urbanisation as a driver of development and peace, to improve living conditions for all.
- Participating nations also presented their statements on efforts to promote the **New Urban Agenda (NUA)** and sustainable urban development.
 - Asian and African countries like India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Rwanda and Uruguay presented an overview of the national policies and practices.
 - Venezuela suggested considering **social housing** as an important **public good**.
 - Korea stressed the potential of **artificial intelligence** and **virtual reality** technology to address urban problems.

UN-Habitat

- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme is the United Nations programme for human settlements and sustainable urban development.
- It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the **First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I)** held in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976.
- UN-Habitat maintains its **headquarters** at the United Nations Office at **Nairobi, Kenya**.
- It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- It is a member of the **United Nations Development Group**. The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the **Habitat Agenda**, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.
- The **twin goals** of the Habitat Agenda are:
 - Adequate shelter for all.
 - The development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.

Schemes to Control FMD and Brucellosis

Cabinet announced special scheme for control of **Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)** and **Brucellosis**.

- The entire cost of the scheme is to be borne out by the **Central Government**.
- The scheme includes **vaccination coverage** to 30 crore bovines, 20 crore sheep or goat, and 10 million pigs.
- **Brucellosis control programme** shall extend to cover **100% vaccination** coverage of 3.6 crore female calves.

About Foot and Mouth Disease and Brucellosis

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a severe, highly **contagious viral disease of livestock** that has a significant **economic impact**.

- The disease affects **cattle, swine, sheep, goats and other cloven-hoofed ruminants**.
- FMD virus belongs to (risk group 4 as per World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Aphthovirus genus of the **picornaviridae family**.
- FMD can spread when infected animals bring the virus into **physical contact** with susceptible animals.
Virus contaminated facilities, contaminated vehicles, raw or improperly cooked garbage containing infected meat or animal products can also spread the virus of FMD.
- In rare cases, humans are also susceptible.

Brucellosis

- Brucellosis is a **bacterial disease** caused by various Brucella species, which mainly infect cattle, swine, goats, sheep and dogs.
- **Humans** generally acquire the disease through **direct contact** with **infected animals**, by **eating or drinking contaminated** animal products, or by **inhaling** airborne agents.
- The majority of cases are caused by ingesting **unpasteurized milk** or cheese from infected goats or sheep.
- Person to person transmission is rare.
- The disease causes flu like symptoms, including fever, weakness, malaise and weight loss.

Threats of FMD and Brucellosis

- **National FMD serosurveillance** has estimated that **21%** of cattle and buffalo did experience in recent past FMD virus infection.
- Brucellosis is an **uncontrolled serious public health problem** in many developing

countries including India.

- Brucellosis in India is yet a very common but often **neglected disease**.

Economic Impact of Foot and Mouth disease and Brucellosis: Both the diseases have a direct negative impact on the trade of milk and other livestock products.

As per the estimates by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**,

- **Direct loss** due to milk and meat could amount to Rs 20,000 crore per annum due to FMD.
- **Indirect losses** due to reduced work capacity, abortions, subsequent infertility and sterility (that account for the reduced milk production subsequently).

India's Livestock Sector

- India's livestock sector is one of the largest in the world.
- Livestock contributed to **4% of the GDP and 26%** of the agricultural GDP during 2010-11.
- India **ranks first** among the world's milk producing Nations.
- **Largest contributor** to the **National GDP** among agricultural commodities.

Government Initiatives

- **FMD control programme (FMDCP)**, initiated in 10th plan period and was extended to 11th and 12th plan period. Presently, it covers 351 districts in 13 states and 6 UTs.
 - The Ministry of Agriculture, Department (of Animal and Husbandry) had initiated '**FMD Mukt Bharat**' under **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)** during 2016-17, a programme to cover all the states which were not covered under the six monthly vaccination scheme.
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Integration of Rural Development & Agriculture Ministry

The Government of India has decided to **integrate the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development**.

It marks the start of an effort to integrate two departments that have tended to work in isolation with markedly varying performance.

The need for integration

- The success in the rural sector through schemes like "Swachh Bharat" has not been seen vis-a-vis agriculture.
- The flagship rural development schemes have been well-funded.
 - They have been target-oriented with clear deadlines and dashboards tracking

- implementation on a near real-time basis.
- The same sense of purpose and scale has been missing in agriculture-specific programmes.
 - The schemes of Agriculture ministry like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana is alleged to have benefited insurance companies more than farmers.
Not only have the gross premiums collected by insurers far exceeded the claims paid out but even these have been made with considerable delays, due to the lack of mechanisms for timely and accurate crop loss assessments.
 - The inability to make any tangible impact on the ground by schemes of agriculture ministry like e-Nam, soil health cards, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, Rashtriya Gokul Mission.

Potential benefits

- Agriculture and rural coming under a single minister is a good thing as it will help bring in **synergies**.
For example, **MGNREGA** is viewed as a pure rural scheme when we should be looking at greater convergence with agriculture for achieving the doubling of farm incomes. There should be the increased focus at asset creation on individual farms, as opposed to community-based works
- The benefits of rural development can be more targeted towards farmers welfare.
- It will streamline the decision making process and negate bureaucratic hindrances among different ministries.

Existing issues

- The Agriculture and Rural Development has been brought under a single minister, but a new ministry is created of **Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries and are kept separate**.
- Ministry of Food Processing Industries is separate from the Ministry of Food.
- The Department of Fertilizers is with other ministries. The synchronisation is still not visible in real term and the fragmentation still continues.

Pension Scheme for Traders

- The Union Cabinet has approved a **new scheme which assures minimum monthly pension of ₹3000 per month to small shopkeepers, retail traders and the self-employed people after attaining the age of 60 years**. This is being done as part of the government's efforts to offer **universal social security**.
- All small shopkeepers and self-employed persons as well as the retail traders with **GST turnover below Rs. 1.5 crore and age between 18-40 years, can enrol for this**

scheme. The scheme is expected to benefit more than 3 crore small shopkeepers and traders.

- The scheme is **based on self-declaration** as no documents are required except Aadhaar and bank account. Interested persons can **enrol themselves through more than 3,25,000 Common Service Centres** spread across the country.
- **The Government of India will make matching contribution in the subscribers' account.** For example if a person with age of 29 years contributes Rs. 100/- month, then the Central Government also contributes an equal amount as subsidy into subscriber's pension account every month.

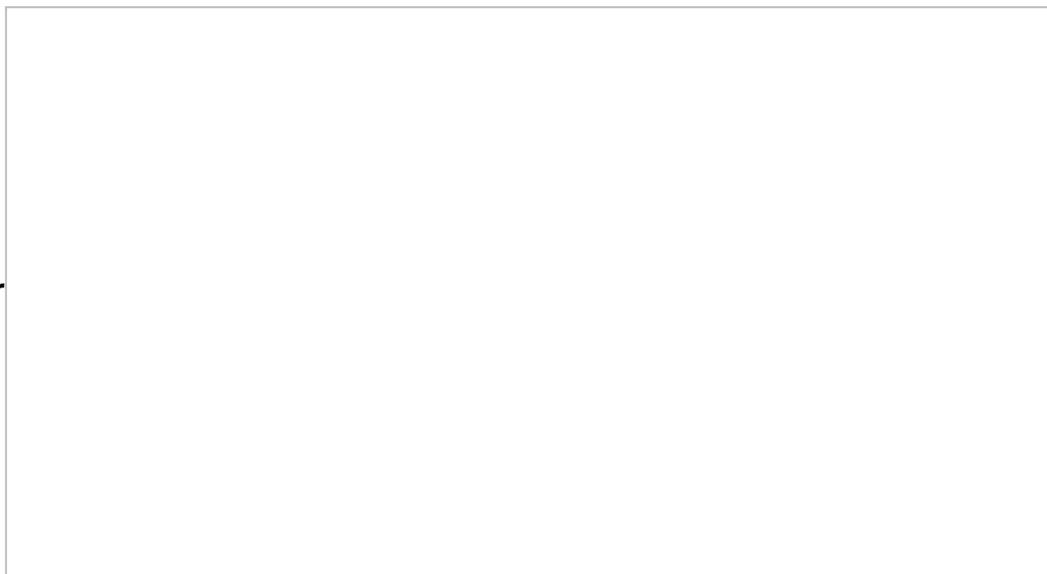
Important Facts For Prelims (1st June 2019)

Kappaphycus alvarezii

Kappaphycus alvarezii, an invasive seaweed which smothers and kills coral reefs, has spread its wings to coral reef areas in **Valai island in the Gulf of Mannar (GoM)** and is set to invade new coral colonies in the Marine National Park.

It has also invaded the shingle, Kurusadai and Mulli islands in Mandapam cluster.

Gulf of Mannar



- It is an inlet of the Indian Ocean, between southeastern India and western Sri Lanka. It is bounded to the northeast by Rameswaram (island), Adam's (Rama's) Bridge (a chain of shoals), and Mannar Island.
- The gulf is 80–170 miles (130–275 km) wide and 100 miles (160 km) long. It receives several rivers, including the Tambraparni (India) and the Aruvi (Sri Lanka).
- The port of Tuticorin is on the coast. The gulf is noted for its pearl banks and sacred chank (a gastropod mollusk).

Marine National Park

- The Marine National Park was established in 1982 under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Total area of the National park is about 162.89 km².
- There are **42 islands** on the Jamnagar coast in the Marine (Gulf of Kutch) National Park, most of them surrounded by reefs.
- **Major ecosystem types** available are coral reefs, mangroves, mudflats, creeks, seagrass, & seaweeds, estuaries, sandy strands to saline grasslands, marshy areas and rocky shores. All ecosystems supports rich marine life & bird life.

GM fungus kills 99% of malaria mosquitoes

Research carried out in Western Africa has revealed that, a **fungus genetically modified** to produce **spider toxin** can kill over **99%** of the mosquitoes that spread malaria in just a month and a half.

- The fungus naturally infects **Anopheles mosquitoes** that spread malaria.
- Genetically Modified fungus on detecting mosquitoes, penetrates the mosquito's cuticle and enters the insect, hence it will be **safe for beneficial species of insects** like major pollinators such as honey bees, wasps etc.
- Fungus **Metarhizium pingshaense**, being malleable in nature can be genetically engineered very easily.
- **Genetic instructions** were added to the fungus so it would start making toxin once inside a mosquito.
- Toxin used for injecting into mosquitoes is derived from the venom of the **Australian Blue Mountains funnel-web spider**.

Significance:

- According to the **World Health Organization** (WHO), malaria affects hundreds of millions of people around the world, killing more than 400,000 annually.
- Decades of insecticide use has failed to control mosquitoes that carry the malaria parasite and has led to **insecticide-resistance** among many mosquito strains.
- Research has paved the way for new avenues in **transgenic approach** to combating malaria.

Govt hikes National Defence Fund scholarship assistance

- Prime Minister has approved changes to the Prime Minister's Scholarship Scheme for wards of deceased defence personnel under the National Defence Fund
- It has been increased from ₹2,000 to ₹2,500 a month for boys and from ₹2,250 to ₹3,000 a month for girls.
- Additionally, the ambit of the scheme was widened to cover the wards of State police

officials martyred in terror or Naxal attacks.

National Defence Fund

- The National Defence Fund was set up to take charge of voluntary donations in cash and kind received for promotion of the national defence effort, and to decide on their utilisation.
- The Fund is used for the welfare of the members of the Armed Forces (including Para Military Forces) and their dependents.
- The Fund is administered by an **Executive Committee, with PM as Chairperson, and Defence, Finance and Home Ministers as Members**. Finance Minister is the **Treasurer of the Fund** and the Joint Secretary, PMO dealing with the subject is Secretary of the Executive Committee.
- **Accounts of the Fund are kept with the Reserve Bank of India.**

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has warned of a potential public health disaster stemming out of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) or e-cigarettes.
- Use of e-cigarettes has documented adverse effects on humans which include DNA damage; carcinogenesis; cellular, molecular and immunological toxicity; respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological disorders and adverse impact on foetal development and pregnancy.

Low-cost indigenous rubbing machine

- A low cost, indigenous rubbing machine, that plays a key role in the manufacture of **Liquid Crystal Displays (LCDs)**, has been designed and developed by researchers of the University of Hyderabad (UoH).

A liquid crystal display or LCD is combination of two states of matter, the solid and the liquid. LCD uses a liquid crystal to produce a visible image. Liquid crystal displays are super-thin technology display screen that are generally used in laptop computer screen, TVs, cell phones and portable video games. LCD's technologies allow displays to be much thinner when compared to cathode ray tube (CRT) technology.
- **The proper anchoring of liquid crystal is achieved via rubbing. Internationally,** the display manufacturing industries have **large rubbing machines** for in-house consumption and R&D purposes. But, **researchers in India rely on manual rubbing** process with not-so-well-reproducible results.
- A patent has been applied for the machine. Though LCDs are not manufactured in India, yet the advent of this technology is a step ahead in future. It is expected that the machine **will not only encourage LCDs fabrication in the country but also**

significantly lower the production cost.

The cost of the machine developed with part funding from the Department of Science and Technology **is more than ten times cheaper than similar ones available in the foreign market.**

PM-KISAN

The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).

The revised Scheme is expected to cover around 2 crore more farmers, increasing the coverage of PM-KISAN to around 14.5 crore beneficiaries.

PM-KISAN

- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, **announced in the Interim Budget**, is one of the biggest schemes launched by the Government of India till date for providing structured support to small and marginal farmers.
- **Under the scheme, ₹6,000 per year will be provided** to farmers holding cultivable land of up to two hectares.
- The scheme will be implemented with an estimated expenditure of ₹1 lakh crore till 2019-20, **benefiting 12.50 crore small and marginal farmer families.**

Pension Scheme for Farmers

The Union Cabinet, has approved a new Central Sector Scheme, that will provide pension cover to farmers.

A voluntary and contributory pension scheme for all **Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF)** across the country has been approved. Entry age of 18 to 40 years with a provision of minimum fixed pension of Rs.3,000/- on attaining the age of 60 years.

- Beneficiary farmer is required to contribute Rs 100/- per month at median entry age of 29 years. The Central Government shall also contribute to the Pension Fund an equal amount as contributed by the eligible farmer.
- After the subscriber's death, while receiving pension, the spouse of the SMF beneficiary shall be entitled to receive 50% of the pension received by the beneficiary as family pension, provided he/she is not already an SMF beneficiary of the Scheme.
- If, the death of the subscriber happens during the period of contribution, the spouse shall have the option of continuing the Scheme by paying regular contribution.

Synergy between schemes, prosperity for farmers:

- An interesting feature of the Scheme is that the farmers can opt to allow his/her monthly contribution to the Scheme to be made from the benefits drawn from the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme directly.
 - Alternatively, a farmer can pay his monthly contribution by registering through Common Service Centres (CSCs) under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
-