

### **Development through Digitization**

- In the last few years, governance in India across sectors has been redefined through business process reengineering, technology and data analytics.
- The government launched several major and minor e-governance and digitalization programmes which were later brought into the fold of “Digital India” programme. After the launch of 31 Mission Mode Projects under e-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan 2.0, due to growing adoption of new platforms such as “mobile” and “cloud”, a need was felt to reorient the Digital India Programme with the vision of “transforming e-Governance for Transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance”.
- All e-governance project now follow the key principles of e-Kranti namely ‘Transformation and not Translation’, ‘Integrated Services and not Individual Services’, ‘Government Process Reengineering to be mandatory in every MMP’, ‘ICT Infrastructure on Demand’, Cloud by Default’, Mobile First’, ‘Fast Tracking A approvals’, ‘Mandating Standards and Protocols’, ‘Language Localization’, ‘National GIS (Geo-Spatial Information System)’, ‘Security and Electronic Data Preservation.
- In the form of DBT India has combined the use of unique biometric identifiers and financial inclusion for effectiveness in social benefits and to reduce the vast number of illegitimate beneficiaries under welfare programmes.

### ***Leading the Way in Financial Inclusion***

- The JAM (Jan Dhan – Aadhaar – Mobile) trinity forms the basic data infrastructure for the India Stack services consisting of e-KYC, eSign, instantaneous payments (UPI) and file storage (Digilocker). It has been the single largest factor for expansion of financial inclusion across the world.
- According to the Global Findex Report 2017 released by World Bank, a whopping 55 percent of all bank accounts created during 2014-17 were opened in India.

### ***Public Finance and Public Procurement going Digital***

- The public Financial Management System (PFMS) has led to the creation of a financial management platform for all plan schemes, a database of all recipient agencies, integration with core banking, solution of banks, integration of state treasurers and tracking of fund flow to the lowest tier of implementation of plane schemes on real-time basis.
- PFMS has also led to just-in-time release of funds and efficient management in the use of funds, including ultimate utilization.
- In 2016, Government e-Marketplace (GeM) was launched for single-window online procurement of commonly used, small-value goods and services. The Central Public Procurement Portal facilitates e-procurement for larger-value items (Rs. 0.2 million or higher).
- GeM enables direct purchase, e-bidding, reverse e-auctions, online registration facilities for government users, product sellers, and service providers and provides a market place for government purchase.

***Pioneers in Innovate Consumer Payments***

- Unified payment Interface (UPI) and Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) have triggered a plethora of private sector-innovated apps, which have significantly eased citizens' bill payments towards services provided by the government.
- Digital payment transactions have now become extremely simple, thanks to the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) UPI. We have seen the emergence of Google Tez and Whatsapp payment.
- A report by Credit Suisse projects India's digital payments space to be USD 1 trillion by 2023.

***Digital Transformation***

- Digitalisation of collection of direct taxes has led to huge benefits.
- The rollout of the goods and services (GST) has resulted in a 50 per cent increase in unique indirect taxpayers compared with the pre-GST system. This translates to a substantial 3.4 million new indirect taxpayers leading to a radical formalization of the economy.

***Digital Monitoring***

- In the Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) programme, Prime Minister has used technology to cut across departmental silos and geographical boundaries to ensure speedy project implementation.
- The recently proposed Ayushman Bharat scheme will digitally link primary and community health centres with district hospitals.

***Impact of Frontier Technologies***

- Analysis by Accenture reveals that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to add US\$ 957 billion, or 15 per cent of current gross value added, to India's economy in 2035.
- In 2017, about 4 per cent of GDP was derived from digital products and services created directly through the use of technologies like Cloud, Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI)
- NITI Aayog is mandated with the task of developing the National Programme on Artificial Intelligence.
- Further, NITI Aayog has also taken up implementation of these technologies for specific use cases, under national priority areas, to assess and demonstrate the benefits of the frontier technologies.
- These are termed as Proof-of-Concept (PoC) projects and are being tested in areas of precision agriculture using AI, land records on blockchain, assistive healthcare diagnostics using AI etc.

### ATAL INNOVATION MISSION

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. It was set up by the NITI Aayog after a detailed study and deliberation on innovation and entrepreneurial needs of India in the years of come.
- The Atal Innovation Mission has two core functions:
  - (a) **Intrepreneurship promotion** through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.
  - (b) **Innovation promotion:** to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

***Atal Tinkering Labs*** – to promote creative, innovative mind set in schools.

- AIM is setting up state of the art Atal Tinkering Labs(ATL) in schools across all districts across the country. These ATLs are dedicated innovation workspaces where do-it-yourself (DIY) kits on latest technologies like 3D Printers, Robotics, Internet of Things (IOT), Miniaturized electronics are installed using a grant of Rs. 20 Lakhs from the government so that students from Grade VI to Grade XII can tinker with these technologies and learn to create innovative solutions using these technologies.
- AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education) is also partnering with AIM to ensure that the closest universities of a school can also mentor ATL students.

***Atal Incubators*** – promoting entrepreneurship in universities and industry At the university, NGO, SME and Corporate industry levels, AIM is setting up world-class Atal Incubators (AICs) that would trigger and enable successful growth of sustainable startups in every sector/state of the country, thereby promoting entrepreneurs and job creators in the country addressing both commercial and social entrepreneurship opportunities in India and applicable globally.

#### ***Recent Activities of AIM***

***Atal New India Challenges and Atal Grand Challenges*** – to promote technology driven innovations and product creation for social and commercial impact.

Under the Atal New India Challenge, there are 17 identified focus areas. These include Climate-smart agriculture, Fog vision system for road and rail, Alternate fuel based transportation, Smart Mobility, Instant Portable Water Quality Testing, Affordable Desalination/Recycling Technology, Waste management recycling/reuse,. Garbage composition devices, Quality of compost, waste in public spaces and Dissuading public littering besides others.

### **Offering a Protective Hand**

- No country or culture can make real progress unless it upholds the rights of women and children and gives them an equal place in society.
- A variety of schemes are being implemented to ensure the safety and wellbeing of women and children. These are intended to also create equal opportunities and build an enabling environment for their active participation.

### ***Changing Mindsets***

- To address the issue of mindsets, the government has extended the Beti Bachao Beti Padoo programme to all the districts of the country. By spreading awareness, close monitoring of abortions and encouraging education of girls, Beti Bachao Beti Padoo has seen success with half the districts of initial intervention showing an improvement in Sex Ratio at Birth.
- In a similar vein, the initiative of Gender Champions is being implemented through educational institutions to help students build an understanding of gender and prevent them from acting in ways detrimental to women and children.

### ***Encouraging Reporting and Supporting Survivors***

- Since many women and children may be hesitant to directly approach the police, a nationwide network of 182 One Stop Centres under the Nirbhaya Fund has been set-up. OSCs offer a single window to services for women facing violence such as police, medical, legal and psychological assistance along with a secure place to stay for a few days.
- Further, women can report violence to the 181 women helpline, which is a universal toll-free number providing emergency and non-emergency response to women in distress.
- 1098 ChildLine is a nationwide number for children in distress situations.
- A significant step has also been 33 percent reservation for women in the police force. This is likely to encourage especially women and children to approach the police and report crimes.
- Children are too often the victims of assault and abuse. To make reporting of this traumatic and sensitive experience easier for children, an online portal 'POSCO e-Box' , has been set up where a child or anyone on his/her behalf can file a complaint with minimal details.

### ***Building a Strong legal frameworks***

- To strengthen the legal framework to protect women and children from the often invisible crime of trafficking, the Ministry has recently drafted the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018. This Bill fills the existing gaps and covers all aspects of trafficking. It proposes to tackle trafficking by creating a strong legal, economic and social environment for victims by establishing dedicated institutions at District, State and National level.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 punishes those who promote, performs and abet child marriage.
- It is further proposed to move an amendment to the law so as to make child marriages henceforth *void ab initio* or invalid in law which will be an effective deterrent to the practice.

- The Ministry is further closely monitoring the implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- An easy-to-use online portal “SHe-Box’ has been launched for online complaints of sexual harassment at workplace for all women in the country, irrespective of their work status or organisation.
- The Ministry is working to ensure protection of women both inside and outside the home. The implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) 2005 is being pushed across the country and women are being provided support to report such cases. Recognizing the need to address the social evil of dowry, the implementation of the Dowry Prohibition Act is being pursued vigorously.
- New taxi policy guidelines for improved women safety have been brought out with better safety measures for women such as mandatory GPS panic devices in all taxis, disabling of child-locking system, prominent display of driver’s identification with photo and registration number of the vehicle, sharing of seat to be subject to willingness of female passengers etc.

### ***Funding Innovative Projects***

- The Nirbhaya Fund, often misrepresented as being underutilized, has in reality appraised innovative projects for women’s safety worth Rs. 6223.79 crore.
- A feature of Panic Buttons will soon be available on all mobile phones in the country to provide emergency response to women in distress.
- The Nirbhaya Fund is also funding to roll-out of comprehensive plans to make 8 major cities in the country safer for women by attacking different aspects such as street lighting, safer public transport, improved policing etc.
- Under the Nirbhaya Fund, the enhancement of forensic capabilities of labs is also being taken up to help faster and better prosecution in cases of rape and sexual assault.

### ***Leveraging IT for Protection***

- A Central Reporting Mechanism is being created to work as a hotline for anyone to report cyber crime and easier processes are being put in place to remove Child Pornography, Rape and Gangrape imagery etc.
- Using IT as a tool to improve protection of children, the Ministry has set up an online citizen based portal ‘Khoya Paya’. On this, information on missing or sighted children is posted to help identify them and reunite children with their families.
- Information on these child-friendly initiatives is also been published inside the front cover of NCERT course books for maximum awareness of these among children.

### ***Rehabilitating Survivors of Violence***

- For this, the Central Victim Compensation Scheme under the Nirbhaya Fund provides additional assistance to State Governments to compensate women who have faced violence.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development requested Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to include acid attack induced damage or disfigurement within the list of specified disabilities.



- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 has included acid attack as a kind of disability, which allows acid attack victims to now, avail disability benefits.
- The Ministry has also set up Child Help Desks in 60 major railway stations around the country known to be common source and destination centres for child trafficking.

***Covering the Last Mile***

- To ensure that the government's protective mechanisms also reach rural women, the Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme has been recently launched. This provides support services to rural women at their doorstep., through 3 lakh student volunteers in 115 most backwards districts.



**REFLECTING THE TRUE SPIRIT OF A JAN ANDOLAN**

- As a basic requirement and human right, sanitation campaigns have been rolled out by successive governments over the past few decades. These campaigns attempt to work towards safe sanitation on several fronts, such as achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) etc.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission, is an unprecedented one- it is the largest behavioural change campaign in the world. The programme aims to achieve “Swachh Bharat” by 2019, by bringing about a general improvement in the quality of life in rural areas, accelerate sanitation coverage, motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and focus on Solid and Liquid Waste Management, among other.
- The world’s biggest sanitation programme the Swachh Bharat Mission’s resolutions for a Clean and Open Defecation Free India by October 2019, is unprecedented in history. When it was first launched, 550 million people contributed towards practicing Open Defecation in India. That number, today, is down to an approximate of 200 million.
- Since 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, over 7.1 crore household toilets have been constructed; meaning that the rural sanitation coverage in India has more than doubled from 39 per cent in October 2014 to over 83 percent today.
- Over 3.6 lakh villages, 382 districts, thirteen States have become Open Defecation Free.
- Over the year, few aspects of the Mission have stood out to set SBM apart from its predecessors and place it on the path of instituting change. At the outset, the programme is led with the continuous support from the highest level to drive change.
- The programme itself is built on initiatives which think scalability during the design process – to reach everyone, everywhere. Along with the stakeholder, it is critical the Mission dictates continuous and close engagement with the implementers, the States and districts to keep up the momentum and enable a steady line of communication across levels.
- With the momentum built and the janandolan getting stronger everyday, an important task for the Ministry at hand is to ensure quality and good housekeeping practices. For this, the Ministry has in place a comprehensive and robust online platform for the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).
- To further improve transparency and accountability, the Ministry takes stock of rural sanitation through large national sample based surveys conducted by third party agencies. The quality Council of India (QCI) conducted a survey between May and June 2017, reflected toilet usage at 91.29 per cent.
- Even more recently, the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2017-2018 was conducted under the World Bank support projected to the SBM-G.
- Unless a village achieves a completely Open Defecation Free status, the oral-faecal contamination route continues. Thus, the path to a healthier tomorrow is not an individual one but the community must work together and resolve towards new habits.
- These past few years, the Swachh Bharat Mission has already demonstrated significant health and economic impacts at the grassroots. In a report “The Financial and Economic Impact of SBM in India (2017)’ UNICEF estimates that a households in an ODF village in rural India saves Rs. 50,000 every year.

- With the entire movement built on people's participation, villages are declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) when all members come together and make a resolution to that effect at an Aam Sabha. Members of the village then form "*Nigrani Samitis*" to ensure that no one breaks the new norm of using a toilet. The ODF status is then verified by third parties at block, district or state level.
- Another important component of SBM-G is Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLRM). To implement SLWM initiatives economically and efficiently, ownership at grass root level and community involvement at all stages is critical. One initiative for the same is the rolling out of a comprehensive self-assessment tool called Village Swachhata Index(VSI) developed to measure cleanliness.
- Swachh Bharat Mission goes beyond mere construction and bases its foundation in behaviour change.
- While behavioural change is intrinsic to India's Swachh dream, it also remains the biggest challenge. To roll out behaviour change at such a large scale, India's diversity complexity and differentiation must be taken into account.
- For this, many initiatives have been taken. Swachhagrahis, a community-level army of 'foot soldiers' and motivators who implement the Community Approaches to Sanitation (CAS) at the village level, and are key to driving progress towards achieving an ODF nation.
- The Mission aims to have one Swachhagrahi in every village, that is, an army of at least 6.5 lakh Swachhagrahis by March 2019.
- April 10, 2018 marked the end of the centenary year celebrations of the Champaran Satyagraha and was celebrated through the "Satyagrah se Swachhagrah" campaign.
- The sense of solidarity garnered in the whole exercise strengthened the strong feeling of community towards making India ODF.
- The mission looks to setting an example for the rest of the world to move towards improving sanitation for all and achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 6 in mission mode, ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



### **New-Age Skills-Generating Opportunities for Youth**

- Skilling youth in new task and jobs is an emerging strategy for realizing the full potential of our young workforce. With the nation's average age of 29, skilling youth at scale with speed and standards is the key.
- Our country has significant disparity in demographic profile of our youth population. There is a higher median age in the range of 29-31 years in southern states. States like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar have a low median age of 20-22 year amounting to a rising working age population. Thus, the paradigms of skilling youth require different approaches for access and relevance.
- As per OECD Economic Survey: India 2017, over 30 per cent of Indian youth in the age group of 15-29 are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- The Government is making stupendous effort for mainstreaming NEET youth. National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has a potential to meet aspirations of youth, addressing inclusivity by leveraging technology. Measures like reducing administrative requirements for complying with existing labour laws are a welcome step. Schemes like National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), statutory minimum wages, contract employment and various financial incentives to entrepreneurs are some of the strategic initiatives.
- It is projected that India will have a skilled labour surplus by 2030, mainly because of its vast supply of working age people and Government schemes and programmes to boost education and skill development. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) have a significant role in meeting the industry demand for skilled manpower.
- Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) can only be realized to the full potential while working in partnerships. Of late, Power and Skill Development Ministries have joined hands to launched a skill development programme to speed up the implementation of the Saubhagya Yojana, which is the government's flagship universal household electrification programme.
- Some of the notable schemes for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship of Government of India are:
  - *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)*
  - *Deendayal Antrodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)*
  - *Director General of Training – Modular Employable Skills (DGT-MES)* – schemes for schools dropouts and existing workers in the unorganized sector for improving gainful employment through vocational training and apprenticeship programmes.
  - *Deen Dyal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)* - placement linked skill development programme for the rural youth.
  - *National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)* – PPP model under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship that aims to promote skill development by creation of large number and quality –oriented training institutes; acts as catalyst in skilling by providing funding to organizations that provide skill training.
  - *National Skill Development Agency (NSDA)*

- *Aajeevika – National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)*
- *Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)*
- *Startup India – scheme to boost Indian startup ecosystem.*

### ***New Age Skilling in the Realm of Industry 4.0***

- Industry 4.0 is characterized by increasing digitization, connected machines, amalgamation of emerging technologies, business analytics and cyber-physical system.
- With fast emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution in India, emerging skills in domains like, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Robotics, Big Data Analytics and 3D Printing Will be in much demand.
- There is need for a collaborative effort between ministries, state governments and industry bodies to train youth for the future jobs.
- There are doubts that artificial intelligence and internet of things will kill many jobs, but historically it is observed that every new wave of technology has created more jobs.
- Integration of Industry 4.0 with Initiatives like 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Startup India', 'Stand Up India' and 'Digital India' are mechanisms that will create new opportunities. Make in India is aiming to transform our nation into a global manufacturing hub; this initiative has the capacity to create approximately 100 million new jobs by 2022.
- Startup India programme launched in January 2016 is generating large scale employment and is building a vibrant ecosystem for nurturing entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Eligible startups are exempted from income tax levy on share premium received as well as given 100 per cent deduction of the profits and gains from income for three out of seven consecutive assessment years.
- Government of India has come out with a new draft for telecom policy – *National Digital Communications Policy 2018* with the aim to create a roadmap for emerging technologies.
- It has also laid out plans to attract \$100 billion investment and create four million jobs by 2022. The policy aims at increasing India's contribution to global value chains by creation of innovation-led startups in the digital communications sector.
- The policy also features training one million for building new age skills, expand IOT ecosystem to five billion connected devices and accelerate shift to Industry 4.0.
- In future, digital assets and workforce capabilities shall be considered as the "new balance sheet" for organizations.
- Promoting apprenticeship is a critical asset for this balance sheet. National Apprenticeship Promotion Programme (NAPS) is a strategic programme in the direction.
- Strategic linkages between Academia-Industry Government can boost innovations and R & D in institutions.
- A right exposure to seed funding, mentoring exposure to seed funding, mentoring network support and technology can unleash their potential.
- India is the sixth-largest manufacturing nation. It has also improved its rank on the Global Competitiveness Index and Global Innovation Index. There is optimism for the prospect of skills and job creation and combination of apt policies, choice of right skills , development of human capital and academia-industry linkages can translate the potential of youth into real outcomes.

***The Road Ahead***

- In line with futuristic skill demands and industry 4.0, the skills agenda has to be revisited as global manufacturing will see structural shifts. Cross functional skills will be critical factor of production and driver of competitiveness; continuous employee re-skilling or up-skilling is the need of hour.
- The government has to inculcate STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in the course curricula, at least basics through the school systems with emphasis on creativity plus critical and system thinking.



### **Rationalising the Tax Structure**

- Fair, transparent and non-discriminatory taxation system is required for massive investments in any evolving country.
- India is no exception. Successive governments looked at reforms aimed at expanding the tax base and rationalising the tax structure. Indian tax system has come a long way from the narrow based, complicated and confiscatory system to the one that is far more efficient.
- Despite reforms, there are lot of works to be done to make a tax-system broad-based productive and efficient.
- In corporate tax, excise, customs and sales taxes, revenue concentration on diesel and petrol had high efficiency costs. The personal income tax continued to be narrow based.

#### ***Taxation Policy Reforms***

- Before 1991 India's overall tax structure had been broadly inefficient and quite inequitable. By international standards, the income tax rates had been high, and there was no VAT at the central level, except on a selective basis from the mid-1980s.
- The consumption tax base was narrow, with services excluded from the tax base, and customs duties were very high yet riddled with complex exemptions. Selected export duties reduced the international competitiveness of traditional exports.
- At the sub-national level, state sales taxes caused heavy excess burdens due to input taxes getting built into the prices of final commodities, resulting in tax-on-tax, or cascading taxes.
- The tax reforms also led to collateral damage in terms of government's inability to make up for revenue loss from rate decreases because of insufficient expansion in the taxpayer base.

#### ***Sweeping Changes in Tax Structure***

##### ***Income Tax***

- India legislated comparable rates of 10, 20, and 30 per cent in 1997-1998. Both the rates, and their number and dispersion, were reduced on efficiency grounds.
- Corporate income tax rates were slashed. The scaling back of corporate income tax rates reflected, to some extent, the twin objectives of administrative feasibility and better tax compliance, but was motivated in particular by the forces of globalization and the increased international movement of capital.

##### ***Tax Administration***

- For any new tax policy reform to succeed, three elements were important - expanding the taxpayer base, computerization; and implementation of the state-level VAT. One of the biggest achievements in central tax administration was the impressive expansion of the taxpayer net for income tax.
- The second half of the 1990s, a voluntary disclosure programme required individual income earners possessing ownership of property and telephones, and trips undertaken abroad, to register even if their taxable income was nil.
- Actually, the initiative towards tax reforms began in the mid-1980s when the government announced a Long Term Fiscal Policy, 1985.

- In that decade, a technical group to review and rationalize the central excise duties was established and this led to introduction of Modified system of Value-Added Tax (MODVAT) in 1986.
- Then subsequently, the government appointed in succession two committees under two very senior bureaucrats to come up with a plan that would substantially overhaul the taxation system and bring it on par or tune it with the international taxation system or rates. So the Raja Cheillah committee and the Vijay Kelker committee came into being.

### **Key Direct Tax Reforms**

#### **Tax Information Network (TIN)**

- On behalf of the Income Tax Department, the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) established Tax Information Network (TIN).
- The basic idea behind establishing TIN was to modernize collection, processing, monitoring and accounting of direct taxes using information technology.

#### **Other Initiatives in Direct Taxation**

- **eSahyog: Paperless Assessments** : The CBDT recently came up with a proposal for paperless income tax assessment over emails. This would save the taxpayer to pay a visit to IT office, particularly in case of small amounts.
- **Sevottam: Efficient Grievance Redressal**: The department is using 'Sevottam' platform that connects all income tax offices in the country. The idea is to address the queries and grievances in real time.
- **Faster Refunds**: The IT department is working towards processing and sending tax refunds within 10 working days.
- **Pre-filled ITR Forms**: The Department is now taking an initiative to offer pre-filled form which are automatically populated with user/taxpayer data and are downloaded with most information filled already.
- **Pan Camp**: To increase coverage of the PAN, the government has been conducting PAN camps across India.

**Indirect Tax Reforms:-** Following are the key indirect tax reforms done:

- **Reduction in Customs Duties**: IN 1990, the customs duty on non-agricultural products was around 128 per cent. It was brought down gradually.
- **Central Excise**: Central Excise duties were first CENVAT is applicable.
- **Service Tax**: Service tax was first introduced on some limited services in 1994-95 at 7 percent. The rate was gradually increased and so was the number of taxable services.
- **Goods and Services Tax**: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is so far the biggest tax reform in the country.
- GST and DTC remain the biggest tax reforms the government has ever undertaken and it promises to make the taxation system easier to comply with, for both domestic and overseas investors. It will go a long way to make the taxation system simpler, increase taxpayer base and considerably increases the tax buoyancy, which will ultimately have a long-term effect in reducing the fiscal deficit of the country.



- The ultimate benefit is for India in terms of higher GDP growth and higher disposable incomes among the population.

### **Making Quality Medicines Available to the Common Man**

- Only around 40 per cent of the populations are able to afford branded medicines. However, the bright side of the picture is, India is one of the leading countries to export world class generic medicines to around 200 countries, out of every 6 medicines consumed in the world, one is from India.
- Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a scheme designed to bridge the above dichotomy. It is dedicated to provide quality medicines at an affordable price to every citizen of the country, irrespective of caste, creed and economy.
- With a view to achieve the objective of making available quality generic medicines at affordable prices to all, 'Jan Aushadhi Scheme' was launched by Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers Government of India in November 2008 across the country. The Scheme is being implemented through the Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI), Gurgaon, Haryana.
- In September 2015, the 'Jan Aushadhi Scheme' was revamped as 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadi Yojana' (PMJAY). To give impetus to the scheme and for greater outreach, the scheme was again renamed as 'Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' (PMBJP) in December 2016 which was followed by a media campaign in national and regional newspapers inviting individuals to participate in the scheme.

Silent features of the Pariyojana:

- Ensure access to quality medicines for all sections of the populations.
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines.
- Create awareness about generic medicines.
- Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.
- Generate employment by engaging individual entrepreneurs in opening of Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

**Continuation of Umbrella Scheme “Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana”**

- In May 2018, the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs has given its approval for the Umbrella Scheme, “Green Revolution – Krishonnati Yojana” in agriculture sector beyond 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for the period from 2017 – 2018 to 2019 – 20.
- The Umbrella scheme comprises of 11 Schemes/Missions. These schemes look to develop the agriculture and allied section in a holistic and scientific manner to increase the income of farmers by enhancing production, productivity and better returns on product.

The Schemes that are part of the Umbrella Schemes are:

- **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)** aims to promote holistic growth of horticulture sector; to enhance horticulture production, improve nutritional security and income support to farm Households.
- **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)**, including National Mission on Oil Seeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP), aims to increase production of rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals and commercial crops, through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a suitable manner in the identified districts of the country, restoring soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level and enhancing farm level economy.
- **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)** aims at promoting sustainable agriculture practices best suitable to the specific agro-ecology focusing on integrated farming, appropriate soil health management and synergizing resources conservation technology.
- **Submission on Agriculture Extension (SAME)** aims to strengthen the ongoing extension mechanism of State Governments, local bodies etc., achieving food and nutritional security and socio-economic empowerment of farmers, to institutionalize programme planning and implemented mechanism, to forge effective linkage and synergy amongst various stakeholders, to support HRD interventions, to promote pervasive and innovative use of electronic/print media, interpersonal communication and ICT tools, etc.
- **Sub-Mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSP)** aims to increase production of certified/quality seeds, to increase SRR, to upgrade the quality of farm saved seeds.
- **Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM)** aims to increase the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions where availability of farm power is low, to promote, ‘Custom Hiring Centres’ to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small landholding and high cost of individual ownership.
- **Sub-Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPPQ)** aims to minimize loss to quality and yield of agricultural crops from the ravages of insect pests, diseases, weeds, nematodes, rodents, etc.
- **Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Census, Economic and Statistics (ISACES)** aims to undertake the agriculture census, study of the cost of cultivation of principal crops, to undertake research studies on agro-economic problems of the country.
- **Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Cooperation (ISAC)** aims to provide financial assistance for improving the economic conditions of cooperatives, remove regional imbalances and to speed up- cooperative development in agricultural marketing, processing, storage.

- **Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)** aims to develop agricultural marketing infrastructure; to promote innovative and latest technologies and competitive alternatives in agriculture marketing infrastructure.
- **National e-Governance Plan (NeGP-A)** aims to bring farmer centricity & service orientation to the programmes; to enhance reach & impact of extension services.



### **Multi-Pronged Approach to Bridge the Urban-Rural Divide**

- The rural sector has been witnessing a gradual structural change in recent years. The share of livestock in Gross Value Added (GVA) in agriculture has been rising gradually, the share of the crop sector in GVA has been on the decline.
- The first ever National Agriculture Policy announced in 2000 sought to utilize the vast untapped growth potential of Indian Agriculture, strengthen rural infrastructure to support faster agricultural development, promote value addition, accelerate the growth of agro-business to create employment in rural areas, secure standard of living for the farm families including agricultural labourer's households, discourage migration to urban areas and face the challenges arising out of economic liberalization and globalization. The policy gave high priority to rural electrification, development of market infrastructure and setting up of agro-processing units to reduce wastage of agriculture and horticulture produce and enhance value addition to create off-farm employment in rural areas.

#### ***National Food Security Mission (NFSM)***

- The National Food Security Mission was launched by the Government of India during 2007 – 2008.
- NFSM aims at increasing production and productivity of wheat, rice and pulses on a sustainable basis so as to ensure food security of the country.
- The Mission has helped in widening the food basket of the country with sizeable contributions coming from the NFSM districts.

#### ***Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)***

- The scheme was introduced in the year 2007 – 2008. The ultimate aim is to significantly increase the productivity and eventually maximize the returns of farmers. The scheme aims at incentivizing the states to increase public investment in agriculture and allied sectors, preparation of agriculture plans for the districts and the states based on agro-climatic conditions, availability of technology and natural resources, ensuring that the local needs/crops/priorities are better reflected in the agricultural plans and reducing the yield gaps in important crops, through focused interventions.

#### ***Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)***

- It was launched in 2016 with an objective to provide a comprehensive insurance cover against failure of crops and help in stabilizing the income of the farmer. It also encourages farmers to adopt innovative agricultural practices and ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

#### ***National Agriculture Market (NAM)***

- National Agriculture Market is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing APMC mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities. The NAM Portal provides a single window service for all APMC related information and services.
- The fragmentation of market, hinders free flow of agri commodities from one market area to another and multiple handling of agri-produce and multiple levels of mandi charges ends up

escalating the prices for the consumers without commensurate benefit to the farmer. NAM addresses these challenges by creating a unified market through online trading platform, both, at State and National level and promotes uniformity, streamlining of procedures across the integrated markets, removes information asymmetry between buyers and sellers and promotes real time price discovery, based on actual demand and supply, promotes transparency in auction process, and access to a nationwide market for the farmer, with prices commensurate with quality of his produce and online payment and availability of better quality produce at more reasonable prices.

***Soil Health Management (SHM)***

- Soil Health Management (SHM) is one of the most important interventions under NMSA. SHM aims at promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) through judicious use to chemical fertilisers including secondary and micro nutrients in conjunction with organic manures and bio-fertilisers for improving soil health and its productivity; strengthening of soil and fertilizer testing facilities to provide soil test based recommendations to farmers for improving soil fertility; ensuring quality control requirements of fertilisers, bio-fertilisers and organic fertilisers.

***Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)***

- The major objective of PMKSY is to achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level, expand cultivable area under assured irrigation, improve on-farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage of water, enhance the adoption of precision-irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop), enhance recharge of aquifers and introduce sustainable water conservation practices by exploring the feasibility of reusing treated municipal waste water for peri-urban agriculture and attract greater private investment in precision irrigation system.
- It has been conceived amalgamating ongoing schemes viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)
- Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and the On Farm Water Management (OFWM).

***Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)***

- It aims to address the critical importance of soil and water for improving agricultural production, The government supports and improves the organic farming practices prevalent in India.

***Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)***

- Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana launched in 2014, is National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pensions in an affordable manner. Accounts can be opened in any bank branch or Business Correspondent (Bank Mitra) outlet.

***Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM)***



- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in 2011. In 2015m, the program was renamed Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM).
- The Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.

***Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)***

- The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan strengthens the Panchayati Raj System across the country and addresses critical gaps that constrain its success.

***Mission Antyodaya***

- Mission Antyodaya is a convergence framework for measurable effective outcomes on parameters that transform lives and livelihoods.
- The mission of the scheme is a State- led partnership for rapid Rural Transformation to bring households out of povery through diversification and development of multiple livelihoods. It is an effort to address the multidimensionality of poverty in a time bound manner through a convergence of resources, both financial and human to provide an opportunity for transformational changes. The vision of the scheme is “Poverty Free India by 2022” by all round development in human development, social development, ecological development, economic development.

***Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)***

- MGNREGS is a social security measure that aims to guarantee the ‘right to work’. The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of “enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. MGNREGA is implemented mainly by Gram Panchayats (GPs) on labour-intensive tasks like creating infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief and flood control.

***Conclusion:***

- The Government of India adopted a multi-pronged approach for bridging the urban-rural divide by upgrading the standard of living of people in rural areas. These initiatives made the people living in rural India much better than what they were a decade ago.