
VAJIRAM & RAVI

Empowering Youth: Towards Rebuilding Rural India

- With about **65.5 percent of its population under 35 years of age**, India is one of the youngest nations in the world. According to Census 2011 estimates, 70 percent of youth population in India comprises of rural youth.
- A policy focus on empowering youth with an increased thrust on skill development, employment, entrepreneurship, innovation and talent development is critical.

Steps Taken

- **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** was formed in 2014.
- The **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)** was launched in July 2015 to provide a strong institutional framework to implement and scale up skill development efforts across the country. Under NSDM, **more than one crore youth** are being imparted skills training annually under various long term and short-term training programme.
- **DeenDayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)** is a skill and placement initiative for rural India. It is one of the clusters of initiatives of **Ministry of Rural Development** that seeks to promote rural livelihoods under the **DeenDayalAntyodaya YojanaNational Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**-the Mission for poverty reduction.
- Skill development through the **Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs)**, enables trainee to take bank credit and start his/her own Micro-enterprise. Long-term skill training is provided through the Industrial Training Institutes.
- Over one crore candidates have been trained under the short-term training programme: **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** that started in 2015. It aims to achieve a more decentralised implementation structure with greater participation from states/UTs and districts.
- **District Skill Committees (DSCs)** under the guidance of **State Skill Development Missions (SSDM)** can play a key role in identifying unique challenges, strengths and potentials that can be tapped in a district.

Case Study

- Kupwara district in Jammu and Kashmir runs a unique initiative of '**mobile skill training**' in kani shawl weaving and traditional crewel embroidery for women.
 - A group of 25-30 women in a village are trained in sheds which are rented spaces in houses of local residents. Once women trainees in a particular village have finished with their course, the **skill centres move to other localities and villages**.
 - A mapping of the existing skill imparting capacities and identification of potential skilling infrastructure can enable better capacity building and infrastructure utilisation.
- As a part of the '**Transformation of Aspirational Districts**' programme launched in 2018, there has been a special focus on skill training of youth in 112 aspirational districts.
 - NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of MSME, Ministry of Youth Affairs and with support from corporate sector has taken the initiative to **create a digital livelihood access platform — Unnati**. The platform has immense potential to connect blue and grey collar workers of India with job opportunities offered by employers across the country.
 - Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has also launched **AI-based 'AatmaNirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM)**' digital platform to bridge the demand-supply gap of skilled workforce across sectors.

- The platform **integrates candidate data** coming to the Skill India portal from various State and Central Skilling Schemes, the database of labour migrants including those who returned to India under and aims to connect job seekers with relevant livelihood opportunities in their local communities especially in the post-COVID-19 situation.
- The Digital India campaign launched by the Government could be drivers of digital literacy and promotion in the entire country.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)** was launched to promote digital literacy in rural India. PMGDISHA is strengthened through the network of the Common Service Centres that deliver various digital services to small towns and rural areas.
- A **'National AI Portal'** and **'Responsible AI for Youth'** was launched recently to lay the foundation for an AI-powered future.
- Digital India's initiatives have also played a pivotal role during the COVID-19 situation with initiatives such as ***AarogyaSetu, E-Sanjeevani, sensitisation through MyGov and other social media platforms.***
- **Neighbourhood Youth Parliaments** organised by the **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan** have played an important role in organising debates and discussions among youth and mobilising them for the Swachhata Abhiyan and other shramdaan activities.
- The newly launched **'National Education' Policy 2020** can become a great opportunity to the empowerment of youth. The policy targets **phase-wise integration of vocational education programmes** into mainstream education by exposing vocational subjects in middle and secondary schools.

Youth And Health

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted the **International Yoga Day** on India's proposal. The **Fit India movement** was launched by the Government to harness the power of youth.
- NITI Aayog launched its action plan **'Let's Play- An Action Plan to achieve 50 Olympic Medals'** ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics. It presented a **20-point action plan in 2016** and made a number of recommendations such setting-up of more sports academies for individual sports, devotion of a fixed portion of school expenditure towards maintaining and enhancing sporting infrastructure and equipment and harnessing the potential of indigenous and regional sports.
- A special emphasis is given to Sports and nurturing the talent of budding sports persons through **'Khelo India — National Programme for Development of Sports'** launched in October, 2017.
- The Ministry of sports and Youth Affairs has recently approved the **inclusion of four indigenous games: Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba** to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021 to be held in Haryana.
- Under the Government flagship initiative, **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, implemented by NITI Aayog, Atal Tinkering labs set-up across the country are helping school students find innovative solutions to problems facing their communities.

Conclusion

We need to continue to engage youth through cultural, digital and social media platforms so that they become aware about their rights and duties and emerge as forerunners in rebuilding rural India.

Rural Youth and Agricultural Transformation

- Agriculture sector contributes around 17 percent in GDP, 13 percent to exports and 55 percent to employment. Additionally, agriculture sustains food and nutritional security for a 1.32 billion strong nation in a self-reliant mode.
- However, India needs to constantly push-up agriculture and allied activities for **enhancing per unit productivity** in a sustainable manner to meet future demand of food, fodder and fiber.

Rural-Urban Migration — A Big Challenge

- Currently, when India needs its youth power in farms and fields the most, the nation is struggling with the grim **challenge of rural-urban migration**.
- Out of total migrants from rural to urban areas, youth account for nearly 30 percent, which is an issue of worry.
- Various studies indicate that majority of rural youth have **lost interest and confidence in agriculture and allied activities** mainly due to unstable income, depleting natural resources and poor image of farming as a profession.
- Shrinking land holdings, inadequate access to finance, limited marketing avenues, and paucity of mentorship or guidance are some other socio-economic factors responsible for exodus.

Ageing of Indian Farming Community

- Waning interest of rural youth has led to ageing of Indian farming community which is a bad sign for future of agriculture and food security.
- While the **average age of Indian population is only 29 years, the average age of farmers is 55 years**.
- In 2006, the **National Commission on Farmers, headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan**, first raised the issue of participation of rural youth in agricultural development.
- Later, the subject was included in the **National Policy for Farmers**, adopted by parliament in 2007, as one of its objectives.

Opportunities and Offers

- To attract rural youth towards agriculture, as a first step, agriculture needs to be **transformed into a high-profitable venture** with low risks and stable income.
- Adoption of integrated farming models, precision farming, organic farming, protected cultivation, multiple and vertical use of farmland and pisciculture are some other potential options to increase farming income multi-fold.
- Current thrust and market-demand of specialty horticultural products, such as exotic flowers and vegetables etc. have opened a new pathway to gain maximum profit from minimum land and resources.
- In animal husbandry sector, dairying has emerged as one of the most lucrative profession mainly due to a wide range of new products. The Government is supporting and motivating youth to take up some **off-beat agri-allied activities, such as beekeeping, sericulture, lac farming** etc. as a profitable venture for livelihood.
- The Government is supporting farm-gate processing facilities to increase income, enhance employment opportunities and also minimise wastage of produce.
- In line with national missions, '**Start up India**' and '**Stand up India**' several programmes have been launched **to promote agri-start-ups** along with several verticals of agriculture.

- As per 2019 NASSCOM report, **India is home to more than 450 agri-tech start-ups**, growing at a rate of 25 percent year-on-year basis.
- During the nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, agri-tech start-ups stepped up and connected farmers with buyers on digital platforms. Some startups helped farmers by even direct selling the produce to consumers.
- To further attract and support rural youth towards agri-preneurship, **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare organises an annual event** wherein agri-tech start-ups are given opportunity to provide commercially viable and innovative solutions for identified challenge problem.
- **Agri-India Hackathon 2020** is the latest in series being organised. Innovative solutions are invited in the field of farm mechanisation, precision farming, supply chain and logistics, post-harvest and food-tech, waste-to-wealth and green energy.
- **Agri-clinic and agribusiness centres** are another scheme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare to foster entrepreneurship in agricultural sector. Under this scheme, fresh and unemployed agriculture graduates are imparted a short-term training (2 months) on entrepreneurship development, that is followed by establishment of need based agribusiness Ventures.

ARYA to MAYA

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), launched a special project in 2015-16 to **attract and empower rural youth** to take up entrepreneurship in agriculture sector.
- Entitled as '**Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture**' (ARYA), this project identifies rural youth (under the age of 35 years) and orients them towards entrepreneurial skill development for gaining sustainable income and livelihood.
- Meanwhile, the massive reverse migration of people, most of them are youth, from urban areas to villages during nationwide lockdown due to pandemic has emphasised the importance of ARYA as a potential source of employment generation.
- To steer the ARYA programme in the most gainful direction, ICAR took the initiative to develop a road map by Organising a specific conference in 2018 on the theme, '**Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture**' (MAYA).
- The MAYA roadmap envisages grooming of rural youth in application of modern technologies in agriculture for economic growth and social respect.
- Rural youth can set up agri- service centres to offer **custom-hiring facilities** for small and marginal farmers for mechanising their farm operations to enhance per unit productivity.

Tapping Young Minds

- The Government intends to make agricultural education more relevant and responsive. Hence, a comprehensive scheme, entitled '**Student READY**' (**Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana**), was launched from the academic's session 2016-17.
- The programme includes five critical components:
 - ✓ Experiential Learning (Business mode, Hands-on training, skill development)
 - ✓ RAWE- Rural Awareness Works Experience,
 - ✓ In- Plant Training,
 - ✓ Industrial Attachment or Internship and
 - ✓ Student Project.

- The ICAR supports graduating students with a **monthly stipend of Rs. 3,000 for maximum of six months** while undertaking 'Student READY' programme.
- The ICAR recently revamped the higher agricultural education network and launched World Bank assisted '**National Agricultural Higher Education Project**' (NAHEP) in Agricultural Universities across the country.
- The project is **promoting efficiency and competitiveness** with a view to make agricultural education more attractive to talented students.
- Continuous emphasis on agricultural education has made the agricultural education system of India as one of the largest national networks in the world. Currently, it comprises 63 State Agricultural Universities, four Deemed Universities, three Central Agricultural Universities and 4 Central Universities with agriculture faculty.

Conclusion

- To attract and sustain the youth in agriculture sector, we need to develop a potent strategy with comprehensive backing from government bodies and public policy making institutions.
- We need to assure that the core concerns of rural youth are addressed effectively.

Empowering Rural Youth Need, Challenges and Way forward

- India is a young country. It is this young population which constitutes a potential demographic dividend. It needs to be properly addressed and harnessed towards positive, constructive and purposeful activities.
- It is estimated that by the beginning of third decade of 21st century, the population of **India would have a median age of 28 years** only as against 38 years for United States, 42 years for China and 48 years for Japan.
- As the renowned Political Economist, Joseph Schumpeter has aptly said, 'the rate of economic progress of a nation depends upon its rate of innovation which in turn depends on rate of increase in the entrepreneurial talent in the population.'
- However, in India, only 4.69 percent of the workforce has formal vocational skills compared to 60 to 90 percent of the workforce in developed countries.

Why Youth Employment is needed?

- In our country, rural folks' access to education and training is often limited by financial barriers (e.g., training and transportation costs) and non-financial barriers (e.g. scarce education and training infrastructure, inflexible training schedules).
- For them, the **opportunity costs for education and training** may be too high to give up their income-generating activities and unpaid duties that help sustain their families.
- Many rural people **do not have basic education**. This also hampers their access to technical and vocational training or other skills development.
- Moreover, **unequal gender relations and traditional gender roles** entail specific difficulties for rural girls and women in accessing education and training.
- Education and training are often of inadequate quality.
- In many developing countries, training systems tend to operate in isolation from the labour market and employers' needs, so training does not always match skills demand.

- With a view to fulfil the above-mentioned objectives, the National Youth Policy, 2014 was formulated.

Various Efforts

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship through **National Skill Development Corporation** has implemented **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana** with a target to cover 24 lakh youth in the country. Later it was revamped to skill 1 crore people over four years period.
- Ministry of Rural Development is undertaking the initiatives in skill development under the **National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM): DeenDayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**. It is a placement linked skill development programme for rural youth between 15-35 years and allows skilling in a PPP mode and also assures placements in regular jobs.
- **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood (SANKALP)** is yet another centrally-sponsored scheme, aimed at creating convergence among all skill training activities, improve quality of skill development programmes through building a pool of quality trainers and assessors, model curriculum and content, establish robust monitoring and evaluation system.
- **Entrepreneurship Development Programme** under PMEGP aims to provide orientation and awareness pertaining to various managerial and operational functions through **Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institutes (RUDSETI)/(RSETIs)** and Khadi and Village Industries Commission/Board training centres as well as other national level Entrepreneurship Development Institutes (EDIs).
- **Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE)** targets improved performance of ITIs, increased capacities of state governments to support ITIs and apprenticeship training, improved teaching and learning, and improved as well as broadened apprenticeship training.
- **National Career Service (NCS)**, a Mission Mode project set in motion by Ministry of Labour and Employment, for establishing quick and efficient career related services across the country by revamping the existing **nation-wide set-up of Employment Exchanges** into IT-enabled Career Centers.
- **Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban mission**, started by the Govt. in 2016 aims at development of rural clusters which have latest potential for growth by provisioning of economic activities, developing skills and local entrepreneurship.
- **Gram Uday se Bharat Uday Abhiyan**, started in 2016 is village self-governance campaign, with a view to improve rural livelihoods, strengthen Panchayati Raj across the country, **increase 'Social Harmony'**, create awareness about modern agri-practices among the rural youth for retaining them in agriculture.
- The role played by NABARD, the apex Development bank of the county and other similar institutions committed towards empowering rural Indian Youth is also worth mentioning.

Case Study: NGOs Playing Important Role

- Several start-ups such as *Neevin Shivpuri*, Madhya Pradesh, *Five Splash*, The Aajeevika Bureau, based at Udaipur have been providing livelihood opportunities to the underprivileged-especially migrant workers.

Way forward

- Expenditure on skill development initiative needs to be raised to nearly 6 percent of GDP by 2022.
- Full-fledged online courses should be launched by the institutions featuring in the top 100 national rankings.

- Since 2017, the total employment in the country declined by 9 million partly because of a low level of education, high drop-out rate, labour market asymmetries, a mismatch between the supply of skills and demand and the high aspirations of young people.
- As of now, the country has roughly 8.5 million teachers whereas the teacher training institutes are only 19000.
- To overcome this problem, in August 2019, erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development announced **NISHTHA-National Initiative on School Teachers Holistic Advancement Programme**, to train over 4.2 million teachers across the country.
- Although remote education is the new normal; internet connectivity, availability of devices, learning platforms, the preparedness of instructors and learners are some of the key challenges that need to be addressed in rural India.
- NSDC's e-Learning aggregator portal-**eSkill India** has been offering curated courses in partnership to provide varied online skilling opportunities.
- India's **New Education Policy 2020** focuses on empowerment of rural youth by transforming India into a 'vibrant knowledge hub'.
- Under it, during grades 6-8, students will be required to take a course which will provide hands-on experience of a number of important vocational crafts as well.
- One of the important objectives of NEP is also to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, **including vocational education from 26.3 percent of 2018 to 50 percent by 2035.**

Future Landscape

- It is an appropriate time to launch an **Indian Youth Guarantee (IYG) programme**, akin to the **European Union Youth Guarantee (EU-YG)** but tuned to our country's context.
- Such an initiative, with statutory backing, can function as a facilitatory framework for ensuring gainful and productive engagement of youth. Its strategic goal should be to ensure that within a fixed time frame, young people graduating from college or losing a job either find a good quality job suited to their education and experience or acquire skills required to find a job through an apprenticeship.
- The **Youth Development Index (YDI)** can help recognise priority areas, gaps and alternative approaches specific to each State. The index also packs a new dimension of social inclusion to assess the inclusiveness of societal progress due to prevalence of systemic inequalities.

Role of Allied Sector in Rural Employment Generation

- More than 50 percent population of the country is directly dependent on agriculture and allied sectors. There has been a tremendous increase in production of agriculture and allied sectors during the planned era of development.
- The real gross value added at constant prices by primary sector registered a compound growth rate of 4.2 percent per annum. Due to structural changes in the economy, the contribution of the primary sector to Gross Domestic Product has **steadily declined to 16.87 percent in 2020.**
- Similarly, the **contribution of this sector to foreign exchange earnings** came down to 10.59 percent in 2019-20. On the contrary, the share of agricultural and allied products in employment generation not only declined at a slow pace from 69.40 percent in 1951 to 41.49 percent in 2020, **but still is very high.**

- The importance of agriculture and allied sector is brought out by the fact that as per census 2011, of the 313 million main workers in the country, 166 million (56.6 percent) were engaged in these activities.
- Agriculture in India is considered as playing gamble with the monsoon. Indian agriculture is characterised with the presence of excess manpower in the form of **large scale disguised and seasonal unemployment**.

Allied Sector

Animal Husbandry

- Among the ancillary activities, animal husbandry being an integral part of farming in India, is at the top. India has been the **largest producer of milk** in the world with per capita availability of **394 grams per day** as against the world average of 299 grams in 2018-19.
- Nearly **19 percent of the world's total milk production** is contributed by India.
- Various schemes and initiatives are -National Livestock Mission, Rashtriya Gokul Mission, National Programme for Dairy Development, National Programme for Bovine Breeding, National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres etc.

Pisciculture

- The fisheries sector is also an important source of income and employment generation in India. The **total fish production in the country shot up to 134.2 lakh tones** in 2018-19.
- The sector provides **livelihood to about 16 million fishers** and fish farmers at the primary level and almost twice the number along the value chain.
- The sector has been one of the **major sources of foreign exchange earnings**, with India being one of the leading seafood exporting nations in the world.
- There is an ample scope for the growth of aquaculture and fish farming in the country, as in 2018-19 only 58 percent of inland fisheries and 71 percent of marine fisheries potential was harnessed.
- With a view to boost the fish production through the creation of additional infrastructure facilities in the country, **Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund** was created in October 2018. The fund aims to boost annual fish production to 20 million tonnes by 2022-23 and generate over 9.40 lakh employment opportunities.
- To bring about blue revolution through sustainable development of the fisheries sector, **Pradhan Mantri MatsyaSampada Yojana** was launched in September 2020. The scheme sets an ambitious target to **enhance the fish production to 22 million tonnes** by 2024-25 and generate about 15 lakhs direct gainful employment opportunities.

Horticulture

- The diverse agro-climatic conditions and wide varieties of soil in the country make it possible to grow almost all types of horticultural products.
- Total horticultural production has increased to 319.57 million tonnes in 2019-20. In fact, the production of horticulture crops in the country has outpaced the production of foodgrains since 2012-13.
- India **ranks second in fruits and vegetables production** in the world, after China. The country **ranks first in the production** of banana, papaya, mango, lemon, ginger and okra.
- Despite huge production of horticultural crops, India's share in world exports amounts to less than 1.5 percent.

- For the holistic growth of the horticulture sector, **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)** - a centrally sponsored scheme was launched in April 2014.

Floriculture

- The diverse agro-climatic conditions enable the growth of all types of flowers in one or the other part of the country round-the-year. As per the third advance estimate of the National Horticulture Board, the production of flowers reached at **2,99 million tonnes in 2019-20**.
- India's total exports of floriculture products increased to Rs. 541.61 crores in 2019-20.
- Recognising the importance of this sector, Government of India has **identified floriculture as a sunrise industry and accorded 100 percent export-oriented status to it**.
- The Government has set up **six agri-export zones for floriculture**; one each in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Sikkim and Uttarakhand and two in Tamil Nadu.

Apiculture

- Apiculture or beekeeping is a lucrative profit giving venture with very low or negligible investment. Beekeeping is not restricted to extraction of honey only, but other products such as royal jelly, bee wax, pollen, propolis and bee venom also yield good income.
- With an output of 64,900 tonnes, **India ranked eighth in the world** in honey production in 2017-18. According to an official report, India has a potential of about 200 million bee colonies as against the present level of 3.4 million.
- A new central sector scheme entitled **National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)** has been launched to achieve the goal of **Sweet Revolution in the country**.

Sericulture

- India is the **second largest producer of silk** (after China) in the world with its unique distinction of **being the only country producing all the four commercially known varieties of silk viz. Mulberry, Eri, Tasar and Muga**.
- The Indian silk products have high export potential because of their distinctiveness and low cost of production. For the development of sericulture and silk industry in the country, **The Central Silk Board** was established immediately after independence in 1948.
- In 2017, in order to strengthen the beneficiary-oriented components in sericulture, the central sector scheme-**Silk Samagra**, was launched.
- It focuses on improving the quality and productivity of domestic silk and thereby reducing the country's dependence on imports of raw silk. To boost domestic silk production, **anti-dumping duty is needed to be imposed** on raw silk imports from China.

Agro Processing

- Agro-processing not only enables to reduce the post-harvest wastages but also helps to fetch fair and remunerative prices to the producers through value addition in their agricultural produce.
- Presently, processing of fruits and vegetables is **only two percent in India**, in comparison to **80 percent in USA, 78 percent in Philippines, 70 percent in France and Brazil, 40 percent in China**.
- The food processing sector faces a conducive growth environment, owing to the availability of fresh, abundant & affordable raw material on the one hand and favorable government policies on the other.
- Moreover, due to rising consumer affordability, rapid urbanization and change in lifestyle, the preference for processed agro-products has been increasing rapidly.

- Realising the importance of food processing sector for the economy, a central sector scheme, **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana**, was launched in 2016. It aims at the creation of modern infrastructure with an efficient supply chain for the processed food industry.

Conclusion

- The Government is keen to double farmers' income by the targeted year 2022, through launching new schemes. In order to achieve this ambitious and gigantic goal within the stipulated time period, it is imperative to give impetus to various farm as well as non-farm activities in rural India.
- Further, the unemployed or underemployed educated rural youth are needed to be encouraged to enter into agribusiness and entrepreneurship in allied sector activities like floriculture, apiculture, sericulture & pisciculture.

Empowering Rural Youth through Water and Tourism Sector

- The sudden spread of COVID-19 pandemic around the world has taken global economies a setback with a **5.2 percent contraction in global GDP in 2020**. The Indian Economy was no different.
- India also witnessed a dip in itsGDP, increase in unemployment, mass migration and other dire consequences of the ongoing pandemic.
- Loss of livelihood and reverse migration to rural India not only upstretched the dissatisfaction among the youth but also created a strain on local resources to offer employment as per their skill set.
- Against this backdrop, it is being said that water and tourism sector have the potential to generate livelihood opportunities for rural youths.

Water Sector

- As per the **UN report on Water and jobs**, it has been estimated that half of the world's workforce i.e., about **1.5 billion people are dependent and employed in one of the eight water and natural resources dependent industries**. Hence, it is evident that the water sector in different facets has a potential to empower the rural youth.
- Currently, India **generates approximately 61,948 MLD of sewage** against the treatment capacity of 23,277 MLD i.e., 37 percent of waste water generated only.
- Hence, there is an urgent need to inculcate the habit of reusing, recycling and treating wastewater in the system. Making rural India ODF++, collecting and reusing wastewater has its own relevance which can only help in conserving and consuming water efficiently but **can also create job opportunities in wastewater sector**.
- **Water contamination** is an important concern. Water borne diseases are directly proportional to water quality. The idea is to leverage communities and private firms offering them a platform to invest in water purification plants at decentralised levels.
- Jal Jeevan Mission (JMM) operational guidelines also mentioned to **identify and train five women from every village** to undertake water quality surveillance through Field Test Kits and sanitary inspection.
- Availability of water for effective irrigation is crucial to agriculture sector ensuring food security for the country. Around 89 percent of India's groundwater is consumed by irrigation sector. Hence, the need of the hour is to build and revive surface water sources.

Tourism sector

- The tourism industry, one of the largest contributors to India's GDP, has been hit due to global spread of coronavirus pandemic. Covid-19 pandemic costs **tourism industry at least USD 22 billion resulting in a loss of 50 million jobs globally**.
- When international travel destinations are found to be risky and unreachable, the idea is to **promote and revive domestic tourism**. Uncharted rural India can attract large number of domestic travellers offering them an authentic taste and serene beauty of India.
- It is also to be acknowledged that **India's natural heritage has been rated the sixth greatest in the world by the World Economic Forum**. Hence, the promotion of domestic village tourism can empower rural youth offering them an opportunity to earn livelihood from logistics and accommodation support, travel guide services and much more.
- Recently launched, Government's scheme '**Dekho Apna Desh**' is one such initiative to promote domestic tourism in India.
- Another segment of industry which can empower rural youth can be '**Education tourism**'. It not only introduces the vast diversity of India to students but also proved to be crucial for their holistic development.

Empowering Rural Artisans to make them AatmaNirbhar

- The art and handicrafts sector is the **second largest employment generator** after agriculture. According to the 2011 Census, there are over **68 lakh artisans in the country of which 55 percent are women**.
- Handicrafts have sustained lakhs of artisans through the years. The sector provides employment to a large number of craftspersons in rural and semi urban areas and also generates substantial foreign exchange for the country.
- Its contribution in preserving India's cultural heritage deserves to be acknowledged. India is the **world's largest producer and exporter of handmade carpets** since 2013-2014.
- The diversity of India's handicrafts is equally impressive. To organise and standardise the Indian handicrafts, approximately 22.85 lakh **artisans have been trained under 'Pahchan' initiative**.
- The Central government **launched a trade facilitation centre and crafts museum** in Varanasi in 2014. The objective was to bring weavers and artisans under the same roof and give them marketing opportunities.
- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship introduced a programme called **PoorvKaushalya ko Manyata** better known as **Recognition of-Prior Learning (RPL)** as a component of its flagship scheme- **the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana**.
- The **Skill India programme** of the government also has a dedicated **handicrafts and carpet skill council** aimed at preserving cultural heritage.
- In India, the **handicrafts sector employs 7.3 million Persons** mostly from rural and semi urban areas whereas the **carpet sector employs two million weavers**. According to projections made by a study conducted by the National Skill Development Corporation, the incremental employment growth in this export-oriented sector stands at 3.86 million by 2022.
- In another unique initiative, the **Ministry has collaborated with school boards such as the Central Board for Secondary Education** to catch young citizens. The objective is to acquaint the

youth with India's cultural heritage at an early age to equip them with skills and give them a possible career option.

- **SANKALP**(Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion) aims to encourage best practices at the local level. **Inclusion is one of the key pillars** of SANKALP and efforts are made to ensure that skill development programmes reach the under-served and marginalised groups.
- The Ministry of Minority Affairs has been organising **HunarHaats under USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme**. The USTTAD scheme aims at preserving and promoting the rich heritage of the traditional arts and crafts of the minority communities. The USTTAD scheme, launched in 2015, is a centrally sponsored scheme.
- The scheme also supports craftsmen and artisans through HunarHaat to market their products in exhibitions in India and overseas. Although the target beneficiaries of the scheme are members of the minority community, the Ministry has kept in mind inter-community solidarity.
- Therefore, **25 percent candidates from BPL** families of non-minority communities are also considered. In addition, **three percent seats are reserved for differently-abled persons** belonging to minority communities. Minimum 33 percent seats are earmarked for minority girls/women.
- Any person wishing to join the training must have studied atleast until Class V, but relaxation is made for differently-abled persons belonging to minorities. The last HunarHaat in real and virtual space in 2020 was held in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh in December.
- Handicraft artisans **can avail of MUDRA loan** and margin money provided by the Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).
- Under the **National Handicrafts Development Programme**, the office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) implemented the **Direct Benefit Scheme** for artisans as a welfare measure.
- Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) is implementing over half a dozen generic schemes for the development of the handicrafts sector. These are the AmedkarHastshilp Vikas Yojana, design and technology upgradation, marketing support and services, research and development, human and resource development, etc.
- While **Baba Saheb Hastshilp Vikas Yojana**, launched in 2001-02 is a **cluster specific scheme**, the other schemes cut across clusters.
- A subsection of the Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana named **DastkarSashaktikaran Yojana**, facilitates community empowerment for mobilising artisans into self-help groups and societies.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Bima Yojana/ Pradhan Mantri SusakshaBima Yojana** and Modified **AamAadmiBima Yojana** provide life insurance protection to handicraft artisans.
- The **Mahila Coir Yojana** scheme exclusively for training rural women artisans in spinning of coir yarn/various coir processing activities is provided to rural women. The scheme envisages distribution of motorised ratts/motorised traditional rats and other coir processing equipment to women at subsidised rates after completion of training.
- The **Workshed scheme for Khadi artisans** gives financial assistance for construction of work shed to artisans belonging to BPL category through Khadi institutions. The government launched in 2017 the **India Handmade Bazaar**, an online portal to give them direct market access by listing their products.

- The **theme-based handicrafts portal** of the government known as **Theme Crafts** showcases more than 45,000 products. It focuses on five themes — Needle work, tribal crafts, natural fibre and eco-friendly crafts, fashion accessories and festive decorations.
- The Ministry of MSME has been implementing a Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (**ASPIRE**) to create new jobs in traditional and agri-based industries.
- **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)** aims to organise such industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support.
- India is home to a large number of tribal people known as Adivasis and has the **second largest tribal population in the world.**
- The govt. initiated the formation of **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)** in 1987 to enable the tribal artisans to participate in the process of their socio-economic development. The **sellers can directly sell their products to TRIFED.**

Conclusion

- The day is not far when India's rural artisans will arrive on global stage. According to Compendium of Geographical Indication Tags of India, a good number of handicraft products were registered under Geographical Indication Tag. This will work wonders and help artisans get credibility for their products.
- Some of the **handicrafts that have been given GI tags recently** are Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Kangra paintings of Himachal Pradesh, Kutch embroidery of Gujarat, bronze ware from Karnataka, and Phulkari from Punjab.

Rural India-The Periphery of Development

- To accelerate the long-term vision of developing the potential of tribal youth and women and integrate them into the mainstream, **Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with Facebook has introduced GOAL programme** to provide mentorship to tribal youth through digital mode.
- Rural women-focused programmes such as "**Nai Roshni**" have been instituted to empower women contributing to inclusive and sustainable growth in rural communities.
- Government has assured to provide electricity and clean cooking facilities to all willing rural families by 2022 under **Ujjwala and Saubhagya Yojana.**
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana — Gramin (PMAY-G)** will provide 1.95 crore houses to eligible beneficiaries during its second phase (2019-20 to 2021-22).
- Swachh Bharat Mission will be expanded to undertake sustainable solid waste management in every village.
- The **Rural Innovators Start-up Conclave (RISC) 2019** organised by **National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj** in Hyderabad showcased start-ups, giving rural innovators a platform to showcase their technologies.
- Along with the **National Education Policy 2019** that includes online learning as an alternative, the government has taken various initiatives to **promote digital learning** under the **National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT).**
- Other such initiatives include **SWAYAM, SWAYAM Prabha, National Digital Library (NDL) and Free and OpenSource Software for Education (FOSSEE).**

- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) **e-Learning aggregator portal — eSkill India** has been offering curated courses in partnership with various knowledge partners.

Cultivating a new Breed of Farmers

- The global increase in food demand, increased adoption of technology in agriculture and assistance in monitoring livestock performance and health are some of the key drivers to the rise of '**Smart Agriculture Market**'.
- The **seven sectors of satellite mapping, e-market platforms, livestock traceability, climate sensing stations, product traceability, agriculture drones, and smart farming** together have the potential to create approximately 2.1 million additional jobs with an annual job value of around INR 34,000 crores for the agriculture sector in the next decade.
- **Developing a new generation of 'Agri-preneurs'** will be a stimulant to achieve the government's goal of doubling farmers' income in real terms by 2022.

Looking to the Future

- The pandemic has created a situation where even the urban dwellers chose to temporarily migrate to the safer, untouched rural lands for months or more. Rural natives have also chosen to stay at their hometowns and engage in traditional economic activities.
- **Companies can explore this window of opportunity to test the possibilities of 'rural shoring'.**
- 'Rural shoring' is a great option for companies who want to realise the benefits of outsourcing by giving work to service providers in rural locations where the cost of living and operations will be much lower.
- With the expanding digital infrastructure and targeted interventions in skilling, this could prove to be a win-win situation for both companies and rural youth.

Rapid Expansion of Gas based Economy is a must to achieve Self-reliant India

- The Government, in January 2021, dedicated **Kochi-Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline** to the Nation. Kerala and Karnataka are two states that are being connected by natural gas pipeline.
- It is an important milestone towards the creation of '**One Nation One Gas Grid**'.
- Rapid expansion of Gas based economy is a must to achieve self-reliant India. Also, clean energy is important for a better future and this pipeline will help improve clean energy access.
- The pipeline will improve the ease of living in both states and reduce the expenses of the poor, middle class and entrepreneurs of both the states.
- This pipeline would become the base of the Gas Distribution system in many cities and would form the base of the CNG based transport system in these cities.
- A comprehensive plan for the development of the blue economy in the coastal states likes Kerala, Karnataka and other south Indian states is under implementation.
- **Blue economy** is going to be an important source of AtmaNirbhar India.
- Govt. is taking policy initiatives to **increase the share of Natural Gas in India's energy basket from 6% to 15%.**
- Sincere work is on for getting **ethanol from rice and sugarcane**. The goal of ethanol blending in petrol **up to 20% in 10 years has been set.**