



### Relevancy

- ✓ G.s. paper 3
- ✓ How is the pilot project being implemented?
- ✓ Technology is involved in dbt in fertilizers and its benefits
- ✓ Other applications

### Recently:

- ❖ The Union government with the guidance of NITI Aayog is implementing pilot projects on DBT in fertilizers.

### How is the pilot project being implemented?

- Initially NITI Aayog decided to roll out the pilot project on DBT in fertilizers in 16 districts.
- Since then DBT in fertilizers has been rolled out in 19 States and Union Territories and 12 States are expected to come on board by Feb 2018.
- By June 2018, DBT in fertilizers is expected to expand its footprint in the entire country.
- These initiatives have been supplemented by Department of Fertilizers, including appointment of 24 State DBT co-coordinators, and organising about 4,500 training sessions across India.

### What technology is involved in DBT in fertilizers?

- Each time a farmer purchases fertilizers from a dealer, he/she presses his or her thumb at a point-of-sale (PoS) device and an authenticated receipt comes out giving details of the purchase and subsidy to be paid by the government directly to the manufacturer.
- The records of dealers are automatically updated and payment is made digitally or in cash.
- Training videos are also placed on YouTube, and the comprehensive redress system in place is being expanded to a multilingual help desk.
- Connectivity issues has been addressed through flexibility in choosing the connectivity option (Wifi, LAN, PSTN) or use of external antenna to improve signal strength.

### How DBT technology is beneficial?

- Farmers, especially those purchasing urea were facing constraints of availability and occasionally overcharged in the past, now satisfied with new DBT mechanism.
- DBT in fertilizer envisages transfer of subsidy to manufacturers upon authentication of purchase by farmers.
- This restricts diversion, prevents leakages, and brings about greater transparency, accountability and efficiency.
- Through this new mechanism farmers received transaction receipts, and were charged the same amount as mentioned in the receipt.
- The grievance redress mechanism has improved and retailers are also satisfied.

### What else could be done?

- The application device must be made agnostic so that retailers can use desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc. to run the application.
- A toll-free number need to be created soon to allow conversations in regional languages will help the farmers.
- The waiting time for farmers purchasing fertilizers need to be reduced.
- While Aadhaar is the preferred form of identification of buyers, other forms of identification should also be used.
- The Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers (2016-17), in its 36th Action Taken Report, has recently emphasised that while implementing DBTs, subsidy should be disbursed directly to the farmer's bank account.
- This requires serious consideration while Phase-I is implemented and stabilised.





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## Indo-Iran Engagement

### Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 3
- ✓ Highlights of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani visit to India
- ✓ The significant trade concession give to Iran

### Recently:

- ❖ Iranian President Hassan Rouhani recently concluded his bilateral visit to India on a successful note.
- ❖ The visit has underlined the criticality of the Indo-Iran engagement.

### What are the highlights of his visit?

- The importance of bilateral ties and the strategic imperative for their growth were stressed in the joint statements issued.
- Discussions were held on enhancing bilateral trade, investment, and ease of doing business between the India and Iran.
- The constitution of an expert group to recommend “trade remedy measures” and a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) was also contemplated.
- Mr. Rouhani endorsed India’s bid for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council with the veto.
- The joint statement also had a toughly worded warning to the countries harbouring “sanctuaries for terrorism”.
- India and Iran signed agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on a variety of issues.
- India was also awarded the contract to operate the “Shahid Beheshti Port terminal at Chabahar, after the project is completed.
- Significantly, no announcement was made on the Farzad-B gas field that India has expressed an interest in, but a follow up on the same is expected.

### What are the significant trade concession give to Iran?

- Just before Mr. Rouhani’s visit, India announced it would allow Indian investment in Iran to be done in rupee terms.
- Notably, this concession is presently enjoyed by only Bhutan and Nepal.
- This allows money lying in Indian banks to be repatriated as payment for Iranian imports, which is mostly oil.
- Till recently, these funds were been blocked because international banks had refused to trade with Iranian entities, fearing further US sanctions.
- In return, Iran extended the credit period for oil payments from India by issuing more generous guidelines.

### What are the larger geo-political implications?

- The present Indo-Iran bonhomie is also in the larger geo-political context, considering that the US has been openly hostile to Iran lately.
- Trump administration has been taking a hard line against the Iranian nuclear deal and even called for its scrapping and re-imposition of sanctions.
- Also, USA has recently asked countries to keep a check on their investments in Iran as these might be supporting terrorism and unrest in the Middle East.
- It is hard to predict if the implications if Indian overtures to Iran would impact the Indo-US ties or the Indo-Israeli ties.
- But irrespective of this, Iran is a crucial energy supplier to India and a gateway to central Asia, which mandates a continued cordial relationship to last.



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## Indo-Nepal relations

### Relevancy

- ✓ G.s. paper 2,3
- ✓ Indo-nepal relations strains
- ✓ How is the Mr. Oli's regime positioned compared to India
- ✓ The major issues for Nepal's new government
- ✓ The internal political concerns of Nepal

### Recently:

- ❖ A stable government has emerged in Nepal after decades of uncertainty, with the leftist coalition rising to power with a clear majority.
- ❖ As the new dispensation takes charge of Nepal's progress, India needs to work on rectifying its equation with Nepal, which is currently strained.

### Why the strain in the Indo-Nepal relations?

- Considering the shared culture, social and economic linkages across the open border, Indo-Nepal friendship and mutual cooperation is only natural.
- But, New Delhi seems to have constantly under-estimated Kathmandu's fierce sense of self, partly due to its global preoccupations.
- Consequently, various Indian efforts to influence Nepal's politics saw severe backlashes in the recent years, to the extent of generating mutual animosity.
- Indian Interventionism - India became progressively intrusive in Nepal, as internal crisis intensified there during and after the Maoist insurgency.
- Also, the hill-plain polarisation escalated during the constitution-writing, with plains based Madeshi groups becoming more vocal due to tacit Indian backing.
- India seemed to treat Nepal as a mere extension of its own territory, with a sense of entitlement, exceptionalism and a big brotherly arrogance.
- Notably, along with the multiple domestic factors, a key reason for prolonged political instability in Nepal has been India's overt and covert actions.
- Chinese Foray - India is understandably apprehensive as the Chinese geo-economic juggernaut has been trying to infiltrate into Nepal.
- Notably, Qinghai-Tibet Railway is expected to reach Nepal's northern border by 2020, and is expected to be a game-changer for the region.

### How is the Mr. Oli's regime positioned compared to India?

- As PM K.P.Sharma Oli's government has a comfortable majority in the parliament, the regime is expected to last its full term unlike previous regimes.
- This provides for the opening of a new chapter in the Indo-Nepal ties, although the regime has largely shared a bad equation with India previously.
- Notably, the bitterness was mainly on the account of the prolonged blockade of the southern border, when Mr.Oli was PM the previous time.
- The perception that India was tacitly supporting the blockaders, saw Mr. Oli resorting to China for ensuring essential supplies.
- Hence, it needs to be recognized there is a need for India to course correct and restrain from coercive intrusive actions to overcome the past bitterness.
- Mr. Oli has been exhibiting pragmatic political traits, which provides for ample avenues for India to rebuild lost love, by promising a hands-free approach.
- In this context, the Modi government has been a swift mover and Foreign Minister Susma Swaraj has already visited the new dispensation.
- Notably, economies progress of the eastern UP and northern Bihar which constitute some of the poorest parts in India are directly tied to Nepal.

### What are the major issues for Nepal's new government?

#### Constitutional Issues



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- Singular majority of Mr. Oli will facilitate the easy implementing the Constitution, which has been partly contentious.
- Hence, the uncertainty of the last two decades seems to be approaching its end, as Nepal's becomes a federal and secular republic, with a 3 tier setup.
- But there is confusion on the powers of various tiers, and that of the Supreme Court, which needs to be sorted out going ahead.
- The transitional years, has left the police, bureaucracy and judiciary politicised, and reversing this will be a challenge.
- The central socio-political task would be to establish inclusive governance by giving Madhesi and Janajathi people a sense of state ownership.

## Economic issues

- Private sector cartels that control the economy to corruption that has seeped to the village terraces are other aspects that needs rectification.
- Raising employment through tourism, industry, agroforestry and agriculture, ensuring energy self-sufficiency through hydro projects are economically vital.
- Winning investor confidence by ensuring rule of law in Nepal is also a primary challenge to rebuild businesses locally.

## Other Issues

- The ongoing truth and reconciliation process has been touted by some as a sham exercise to pardon wartime (maoist) atrocities.
- With Nepal having been recently elected to the UN Human Rights Council, there is opportunity to raise Nepal's international profile.
- Considering the constitutional safeguards and that the hardliners representing Hindutva ideology have been completely routed is a positive in this regard.
- Post-earthquake reconstruction, has become increasingly scandalous due to allegations of corruption, which needs to be rectified.
- On the foreign policy front, balancing India and China would be crucial.

## What are the internal political concerns of Nepal?

- Mr. Oli's primary preoccupation will be managing the government's relationship with the opposition Nationalist Congress and the Madesh parties.
- Notably, a number of statues under the framework of the new constitution remains to be drafted, which will certainly require a larger consensus.
- Also, Mr Oli's alliance partner Mr. Prachanda is another constraint in the larger scheme of things whose unwavering support is not a granted one.
- Despite being a junior partner, Mr. Prachanda has been nurturing Prime Ministerial ambitions which might derail the stable mandate.
- While the two parties are indeed preparing a permanent unification document currently, it is important to ensure that parallel power centers don't arise.



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## The Story Of Public Spending On Education

### Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 2
- ✓ What is the public spending on education?
- ✓ What were the conditions when Kothari commission's recommendation came out?
- ✓ What have been the Budgets take on Education over the years?

### Recently:

- ❖ Despite favorable social climate, education has failed to become a matter of national concern.
- ❖ This year's Budget is no different than the previous budgets.
- ❖ It offers a marginal increase on different routine expenses and reduction on some.
- ❖ There is no sign of funds to enable institutional recovery after a prolonged period of damage caused by financial cuts in higher education.
- ❖ In elementary education, supply of funds for improvement in quality is no more certain.
- ❖ No funds are in sight to sustain the bold dream of making the Right to Education a sustainable reality.

### What is the public spending on education?

- In 1966, the Kothari Commission had said in its voluminous report that India should aim at spending 6% of its GDP on education.
- We are currently spending less than 3% of our GDP on education.

### What were the conditions when Kothari commission's recommendation came out?

- At the time the commission chaired by D.S. Kothari was drafting its report, India was passing through a difficult period.
- Famines, wars and political uncertainty were taking their toll.
- The economy was stuck in sluggish growth, and the idealism of the freedom struggle was waning.

### What are the present conditions?

- India is more prosperous today and people's aspirations are higher.
- Education is valued across different sections and strata.
- Despite having favorable social climate, education has failed to become a matter of national concern.

### What have been the Budgets take on Education over the years?

- Budgets have been offering a marginal increase in different routine expenses.
- There is no sign of funds to enable institutional recovery after a prolonged period of damage caused by financial cuts in higher education.
- No funds are in sight to sustain the bold dream of making the Right to Education a sustainable reality.

### Focus on teachers training

- In this year's budget, the Finance Minister referred to the importance of teacher education.
- Teacher training constitutes a relatively invisible, low-status sector of the system.
- It seldom receives high-level attention.
- A few prestigious colleges that were set up under British rule a century ago have lost their sheen,

### What did JS Verma commission focus on?

- A commission was appointed by the Supreme Court under the chairpersonship of the late Chief Justice of India, J.S. Verma.
- The report of this commission brought to public attention the dismal state of teacher education.
- Rampant commercialisation and rigid bureaucratic control combined to stifle any possibility of academic growth in teacher education.

### Achieving quality in teacher training

- The Finance Minister made a special mention of the four-year integrated B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) programme as a way forward for achieving quality in teacher training.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been running such courses at regional level.

### Why India is not worried about its educational crisis?

- In the first few decades following Independence, resources were limited and they were used for other, more immediate needs.



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- Then, for a little while, it seemed as if education might become a priority because social demand for it had increased.
- However, before this demand could acquire a political voice, the state got seduced by the option to privatize education.

## **What could be the outcome of this deepening crisis?**

- The damage our institutional apparatus has suffered over the last three decades has begun to hurt our long-term national economic interests and social goals.
- The United Nations discourse of sustainable development should remind us that our national aspirations might get a jolt if we fail to prioritise education.



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