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INTRODUCTION - INDIA ON THE MOVE

Development today is not thought of just in terms of economic growth of a nation but includes parameters in sectors such as education, health, agriculture and farmers' welfare, skill development and employment opportunities for youth.

Indian Government has also not lagged behind in its efforts to promote development of the country.

1. Beginning with the economy, the government has rationalised the tax structure with introduction of measures like GST and banking sector reforms. Key direct reforms like establishment of Tax Information Network (TIN), Electronic Return Acceptance and Consolidation System (ERACS) eSahyog etc have simplified the tax regime.
2. The rapid adoption of digital technology across various sectors through business process engineering, technology and data analytics is reshaping the way government programmes are being designed and implemented. Direct Benefit Transfer, Public Finance Management System, e-marketplace, Digital payment transactions through BHIM App etc. are making government responsive through a new interface.
3. Swachh Bharat Mission has truly rolled out into a mass movement or a Jan Andolan. Since October 2, 2014 over 7.1 crore household toilets have been constructed with the rural sanitation coverage in India more than doubling from 39 percent in October 2014 to over 83 percent today.
4. Healthcare is another important angle of development. Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana has tried to address this problem through its centres across the country.
5. Protecting the vulnerable began with changing the mindset of people towards girl child through Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and gender champions, creating helplines for women and children in distress and rehabilitating survivors of violence, the government has always sought to ensure that every woman and child in India lives in an environment free from fear and aspire to contribute to the national growth.
6. Rural development is vital to the development of the nation. The government, through its various schemes like National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana etc have sought to address the issue of farmers' welfare, double their income and bridge the urban-rural divide.

Conclusion -

Growth is never merely by chance, it is the result of forces working together. And in India, the forces are marching in the right direction to take the nation to new horizons.

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DIGITISATION

The astronomical pace of digital data generation, dropping costs of data storage and compute infrastructure have enabled digitalisation at unprecedented levels which is now being termed as the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Governance and Technology -

1. Technology is reshaping the way government is designing and implementing programmes. The government has launched several major and minor e-governance and digitalisation programmes which were all later brought into the fold of "Digital India" programme.
2. All eGovernance projects now follow the key principles of e-Kranti namely "Transformation and not Translation", 'Integrated Services and not Individual Services', 'Government Process Reengineering (GPR) to be mandatory in every MMP', 'Cloud by Default', 'Mobile First', 'Fast Tracking Approvals', 'Mandating Standards and Protocols', 'Language Localisation', 'National GIS (Geospatial Information System)', 'Security and Electronic Data Preservation'.
3. 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.

4. Its implementation has led to 2.75 crore duplicate, fake or non-existent ration cards being deleted, and 3.85 crore duplicate and inactive consumers for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) subsidy being eliminated.

JAM Trinity -

1. The Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile (JAM) trinity forms the basic data infrastructure for the India Stack Services consisting of e-KYC, eSign, instantaneous payments (UPI) and file storage (Digilocker).
2. It has been the single largest factor for expansion of financial inclusion across the world.
3. According to 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 -

1. The Public Financial Management System (PFMS) has led to the creation of a financial management for all plan schemes, a database of all receipt agencies, integration with core banking solution of banks, integration of state treasurers and tracking of fund flow to the lowest tier of implementation of plan schemes on real-time basis.
2. PFMS has also led to just-in-time release of funds and efficient management in the use of funds, including ultimate utilisation.
3. In 2016, Government e-Marketplace (GeM) was launched for a single-window online procurement of commonly used, small-value goods and services. GeM enables direct purchase, e-bidding, reverse e-auctions, online registration facilities for government users, product sellers, and service providers and provides a marketplace for government purchase.

Pioneers in Innovative Consumer Payments -

Unified Payments 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 Transformation -

Digitalisation of collection of direct taxes has led to huge benefits. The Income Tax Department received 6.84 crore income tax returns in the FY 17-18, a growth of 26 percent and an additionality of more than one crore new tax returns. 98.5 percent of those IT returns have been filed online.

Digital Monitoring -

1. In the Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) programme, the Prime Minister has used technology to cut across department silos and geographical boundaries to ensure speedy project implementation. He has dealt directly with senior central and state officials to monitor, review and evaluate progress of social sector schemes and infrastructure projects that were facing several bottlenecks.
2. The recently proposed Ayushman Bharat Scheme will digitally link primary and community health centres with district hospitals.

Impact of Frontier Technologies -

1. Analysis by Accenture reveals that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to add USD 957 billion, or 15 percent of current gross value added, to India's economy in 2035. India offers unique challenges that can be solved by application of AI.
2. In 2017, about 4 percent of GDP was derived from digital products and services created directly through the use of technologies like Cloud, Internet of Things and artificial intelligence.
3. NITI Aayog, mandated with the task of developing the National Programme on Artificial Intelligence, has been engaged in discussion with ministries, academia, industry, researchers and startups. This is a qualitative

effort to understand the technologies, their utility for the economy and governance, risks they pose and their future development trajectory.

4. Proof-of-Concept projects are being tested in areas of precision agriculture using AI, land records on blockchain, assistive healthcare diagnostics using AI etc.
5. The goal of these PoCs is to test the effectiveness of the technologies in solving the extant problems and demonstrating the feasibility of adopting frontier technologies in governance at a national scale.

Conclusion -

The rapid adoption of digital technology across sectors is making things easy and eliminating all forms of human intervention. This has a major impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of governance.

MAKING DEVELOPMENT A MASS MOVEMENT

The present government has reportedly announced a three pronged agenda - development, fast paced development, and all round development. With the aim of promoting growth and development, the government has launched a slew of programmes: Jan Dhana Yojana, Digital India, Make in India, Skill India, MUDRA Bank Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, Ayushman Bharat, and the list goes on and on.

Addressing Market Failures -

1. The present government's strong push to infrastructure projects-not only to new projects but also to kickstart the stalled projects of the earlier governments - is well-meaning in so far as it addresses market failure in the provision of public goods.
2. Further, by being a founding member of the International Solar Alliance, the government has demonstrated a proactive role in the creation of global public goods too.
3. Whether in giving a strong push to digital transactions or placing a renewed emphasis on National Nutrition Mission or launching Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, it is all about capturing the positive spillovers that each of these interventions has on the development processes.
4. Similarly, advancing the implementation of the Bharat Stage emission norms from IV to VI to curb vehicular pollution or banning the sale and import of oxytocin to prevent its misuse is all about reducing the negative spillovers.
5. The government is also filling for the 'missing' markets, by rolling out programmes such as Jana Dhana Yojana aimed at financial inclusion, Housing for All programme aimed at subsidising the cost of home loans for the lower-income class, Skill India Mission aimed at providing vocational and technical training and many more.
6. In order to boost sustainable economic growth, the government has launched various programmes for promoting agricultural production and productivity (Pradhan mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, Soil Health Cards, Fasal Bima Yojana etc.), for encouraging small entrepreneurs/innovators through easy bank finance (Mudra Yojana, Startup India, and Standup India) and so forth.

Addressing Challenges -

1. The government has made provisions for setting up of new regulatory bodies as well as for the strengthening of the existing regulatory bodies. For example, the government has passed the Real Estate Act to bring greater transparency in the real estate transactions and to safeguard the interest of home buyers. Similarly, the government has been strengthening the food safety regulations in India, tightening the banking regulations and so forth.
2. To ensure professional ethics, the government is also keeping a watch on the conduct of professional bodies of medical doctors, accountants, auditors and so forth.

3. In the social sector too, the government is addressing regulatory issues. For example, in the absence of a health sector regulator, there had been large-scale market failure in drugs and medical device industry, rife with commissions and kickbacks.
4. In order to improve the performance of public sector enterprises, the government has set for itself ambitious disinvestment targets.
5. Further, the government is also seeking to minimise political interference in the management of these enterprises.

Promoting equity -

1. In order to promote equity, the government has pursued several initiatives that are specific to certain geographies as well as to certain population groups. For example, the government has placed special emphasis on the development of North East region.
2. Similarly, the government has identified over 100 "aspirational" districts that are lagging on certain key development indicators to give special emphasis to accelerate the pace of development in these districts.
3. Likewise, equitable development is the driving force behind the government initiative of achieving 100 percent village electrification within the 1000 days of this government.
4. To safeguard the health of women and children, the government started the Ujjwala Yojana under which free LPG (clean cooking fuel) connection is provided to women from BPL families.
5. National Health Protection Scheme seeks to insulate the poor and the vulnerable families from hospitalisation expenses during illnesses.

Another rationale -

The government is seeking to influence the people's thought processes, behaviour and choices through social messaging in several areas - whether in promotion of the girl child or making villages open defecation free. The Prime Minister has not shied away from lending his own voice in urging people to practice Yoga, to use Khadi clothes, to give-up LPG subsidy and to switch over to LED bulbs.

Conclusion -

In a country with huge development deficit relative to the rising aspiration of its people, there are several areas vying for the government's attention. The government is moving on many fronts - all at the same time.

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. The Government takes the holistic view to ensure the welfare and safety of women and children. A variety of schemes are intended to create equal opportunities and build an enabling environment for their active participation.

Changing Mindsets -

1. For this, the government has extended the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme to all the districts of the country. By spreading awareness, close monitoring of abortions and encouraging education of girls.
2. The initiative of Gender Champions is being implemented through educational institutions to help student build an understanding of gender and prevent them from acting in ways detrimental to women and children.

Encouraging Reporting and Supporting Survivors -

1. Since many women an children may be hesitant to directly approach the police, a nation-wide 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.
2. 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. Similarly, 1098 ChildLine is a nationwide number for children in distress situations and has manage 1.8 crore calls in the last year.
3. 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.
4. To make reporting of traumatic and sensitive experience easier for children, an online portal 'POCSO 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 Framework -

1. To strengthen the legal framework to protect women and children from the often invisible crime of trafficking, Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 has been drafted. 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.
2. The legal framework for protection of children from societal practices such as child marriage is also being strengthened and stringently implemented. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 punishes those who promote, perform and abet child marriage.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Recognising the need to address the social evil of dowry, the implementation of the Dowry Prohibition Act is being pursued vigorously. The Act defines dowry and penalises the giving, taking or abetting the giving and taking of dowry.
6. New taxi policy guidelines for improved women safety has 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 underutilised, has in reality appraised innovative projects for women's safety worth Rs 6,223.79 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 the 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.

Leveraging IT for protection -

1. 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.
2. Using IT as a tool to improve the 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.

Rehabilitating Survivors of Violence -

1. The Central Victim Compensation Scheme under the Nirbhaya Fund provides additional assistance to State Governments to compensate women who have faced violence.
2. 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.
3. The recently enacted 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.
4. In an innovative move, 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.

Conclusion -

Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme has been recently launched to provide support services to rural women at their doorstep, through 3 lakh student volunteers in 115 most backward districts. The government seeks to ensure that every woman and child in India should be able to step out of their homes without fear and strives to ensure that this is achieved.

REFLECTING THE TRUE SPIRIT OF A JAN ANDOLAN

Clean water and safe sanitation are critical to survival, and their absence can impact health, food security, and livelihoods of families across the world. 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.

Swachh Bharat Campaign -

1. 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 others.
2. Since 2nd 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 percent in October 2014 to over 83 percent today. To put this in perspective, the sanitation coverage has increased more in three and a half years than it did in the preceding 67 years since India's independence.
3. 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). Household level data with respect to sanitation facilities of all villages in India is made available on the Management Information System (MIS) by State Governments on the basis of the Baseline Survey of 2012-13.
4. To further improve transparency and accountability, the Ministry takes stock of rural sanitation through large national sample based surveys conducted by third party agencies.

5. Even more recently, the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2017-18 was conducted under the World Bank support project to the SBM-G, with a sample size of over 92,000 households across 6,136 villages. The survey has also reconfirmed the ODF status of 95.6 percent of ODF verified villages.
6. In a report 'The Financial and Economic Impact of SBM in India (2017)' UNICEF estimates that a household in an ODF village in rural India saves Rs 50,000 every year.

How ODF status is granted?

With the entire movement built one 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. All the data is maintained in a robust database down to the household level, available to the public on the SBM-G website.

Solid and Liquid Waste Management -

1. 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.
2. One initiative for the same is the rolling out of a comprehensive self-assessment tool called Village Swachhata Index (VSI) developed to measure cleanliness. The VSI arrives at a Swachhata score based on percentage of households with access to safe toilets and usage, littering around the households and public places, and stagnant waste water around the households.
3. The democratic self-assessment is made in Gram Sabha by the village people themselves.

Significance of Jan Andolan -

1. It has been observed repeatedly that when the community invests in own resources (especially financial resources) in sanitation interventions, the interventions are much more sustainable.
2. Cleanliness cannot be achieved through Budget allocation. Behavioural change is the solution. It should become a mass movement.
3. 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 and ODF nation.
4. Swachhagrahis are often natural leaders who have been engaged through existing arrangements like the Panchayati Raj Institutions, cooperatives, ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, women groups, Self-Help Groups etc.
5. The presence of outside Swachhagrahis in the villages in Bihar made the audiences even more receptive of the sanitation messages. The outside Swachhagrahis broke language barriers with the help from their local counterparts and local officials and technical staff. Their interventions proved highly beneficial and rendered a great sense of competition and cross learning amongst the various groups.
6. The sense of solidarity garnered in the whole exercise strengthened the strong feeling of the community towards making India ODF.

Conclusion -

The Mission looks to setting an example for the rest of the world to move towards improving sanitation for all and achieving the United Nations 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 tasks and jobs is an emerging strategy for realising the full potential of our young workforce. 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 years amounting to a rising working age population. Thus, the paradigms of skilling youth require different approaches for access and relevance.

Tapping the demography -

As per OECD Economic Survey - India 2017, over 30 percent of Indian youth in the age group of 15-29 are not in employment, education or training (NEET). This is more than double the OECD average. The Government is making stupendous efforts for mainstreaming NEET youth. National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has the 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 incentives.

Reaping the fruits of demographic dividends -

1. With more youth joining the mainstream through education and skilling, it is projected that India will have a skilled labour surplus by 2030.
2. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) have a significant role in meeting the industry demand for skilled manpower. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has announced one ITI with industry-relevant skills in every block of the country by the end of 2018.
3. 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 realised to the full potential while working in partnerships with State Governments.
4. Power and Skill Development Ministries have joined hands to launch 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 -

1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
2. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)
3. Director General of Training - Modular Employable Skills (DGT-MES)
4. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
5. National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)
6. National Skill Development Agency
7. Aajeevika - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)
8. Atal Innovation Mission
9. Startup India

New Age Skilling in the Realm of Industry 4.0 -

1. Industry 4.0 is characterised by increasing digitisation, connected machines, amalgamation of emerging technologies, business analytics and cyber-physical systems. This leads to productive enhancement and resource optimisation. In this regime, low-skilled jobs will be eliminated, but an increase in capacity will create new jobs requiring higher levels of skills. 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.

2. The future jobs will be 'task based'. These tasks will focus on acquiring new skills on critical thinking, design thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and cognitive learning.
3. New employment opportunities, also known as gig economy will emerge like online developers, coders, multimedia professionals, online sales and marketing professionals, systems thinking, and multilingual and multi-modal capabilities.
4. Integration of Industry 4.0 with Initiatives like 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Startup India', 'Standup India' and 'Digital India' are mechanisms that will create new opportunities.
5. Government of India is supporting programmes such as Digital India's budget doubled to Rs 3,073 crores in 2018-19 and there are plans to set up Centers of Excellence for research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, big data analytics and IOT.
6. 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 contributions 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.

Nurturing Innovation Climate -

1. Strategic linkages between Academia-Industry-Government can boost innovations and R&D in institution.
2. Industry has a significant role to play in skilling the youth by providing such opportunities through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budgets.
3. A right exposure to seed funding, mentoring, network support and technology can unleash their potential.
4. 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.

Way forward -

1. In line with futuristic skill demands and industry 4.0, the skills agenda has to be revisited as global manufacturing will see structural shifts.
2. 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 systems thinking.
3. Government of India is trying to push the transformational change through various models and schemes and our youth is flexible enough to adapt to new opportunities.

RATIONALISING THE TAX STRUCTURE

Any massive investments will not come easily unless it has a taxation system that is just, fair, transparent and non-discriminatory and motivating enough to enthuse investors to put their monies into productive purposes. This has been realised world over and India is no exception. Successive governments looked at reforms aimed at expanding the tax base and rationalising the tax structure.

Many research papers on the Indian taxation system broadly indicate one thing - that the Indian tax system has come a long way from the narrow based, complicated and confiscatory system to the one that is far more efficient. One of the first major reforms in the taxation system was to convert the state level sales tax into VAT.

Taxation Policy Reforms -

1. If one were to compare the structure of India's main central government taxes with those prevailing before 1991, there is a clear indication that following international trends, government undertook a sizable scaling back of rates in income, excise and trade taxes.
2. States also attempted to harmonise their sales tax rates and, most importantly, introduced a value-added tax (VAT) on 1 April, 2005, comprising perhaps the most important sub-national tax reform since the formation of the Indian Republic in 1950.
3. 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.
4. Given this scenario, the changes in India's tax structure are generally agreed to have led to improvements in its efficiency and equity, tax experts say.
5. The central government's tax revenue collected since 1994 declined by 1 percent of GDP from what had been collected previously.

Income Tax -

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 globalisation and the increased international movement of capital. In India, corporate income tax rates for both domestic and foreign companies were reduced to 35 percent and 40 percent respectively.

Tax Administration -

1. For any new tax policy reform to succeed, three elements were important, expanding the taxpayer base, computerisation; and implementation of the state-level VAT.
2. One of the biggest achievements in central tax administration was the impressive expansion of the taxpayer net for income tax.
3. 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.
4. Actually, the initiative towards tax reforms began in the mid-1980s when the government announced a Long Term Fiscal Policy, 1985.
5. In that decade, a technical group to review and rational the central excise duties was established and this led to introduction of Modified System of Value-Added Tax (MODVAT) in 1986.
6. 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.

1. Raja Chelliah Committee -

To lay out an agenda for reforming India's tax system, this TRC came up with three reports in 1991, 1992 and 1993 with several measures, which can be summarised as -

1. Reforming the personal taxation system by reducing the marginal tax rates.
2. Reduction in the corporate tax rates.
3. Reducing the cost of imported inputs.
4. By lowering the customs duties.
5. Reduction in the number of Customs tariff rates and its rationalisation.
6. Simplifying the excise duties and its integration with a Value Added Tax (VAT) system.
7. Bringing the services sector in the tax net within a VAT system.

8. Broadening of the tax base.
9. Building a tax information and computerisation system.
10. Improving the quality of tax administration system.

2. **The Vijay Kelkar Committee -**
   The main recommendations of this task force related to the direct taxes related to increasing the income tax exemption limit, rationalisation of exemptions, abolition of long term capital gains tax, abolition of wealth tax etc.

Key recommendations -

1. The taxpayer services should be extended both in quality and quantity and taxpayers should get easy access through internet and email.
2. PAN should be expanded and it should cover all citizens.
3. Block assessment of search and seizure cases should be abolished.
4. To clear the backlog, the department should outsource the data entry work.
5. All returns and issue of refunds should be complete in a four month period. Dispatch of refunds should be outsourced.
6. Government should establish a Tax Information Network to modernise, simplify and rationalise tax collection, particular TDS and TCS.
7. Abolish the requirement of Tax Clearance Certificate on leaving the country.
8. Empower CBDT with appropriate administrative and financial powers.

Personal Income Tax -

1. Increase in exemption limit to Rs 1 lakh for the general categories of taxpayers and further exemption for senior citizens and widows.
2. Rationalise the income tax slabs, eliminate surcharge on personal income tax.
3. Incentivise home loans by providing interest subsidy on home loans @ 2 percent.
4. Increase deduction under Section 80CCC for contribution to pension funds.

Corporation Tax -

1. Reduce the Corporate Tax to 30 percent for domestic companies and 35 percent for foreign companies.
2. The listed companies should be exempted from tax on dividends and capital gains.
3. Increase rate of depreciation for plant and machinery.
4. Abolish Minimum Alternate Tax.

Wealth Tax -

1. Abolition of wealth tax.

DTC has never arrived and government does not seem to go seriously after it because most of its provisions are already incorporated in the Income Tax Act.

Key Direct Tax Reforms -

1. **Tax Information Network -**
   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 modernise collection, processing, monitoring and accounting of direct taxes using information technology.

2. **Electronic Return Acceptance and Consolidation System (ERACS) -**
   ERAC consists of a system for interface with the taxpayers (TIN Facilitation Centres that is TIN-FC) and an internet supported system for uploading electronic returns of Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) and Tax Collection at Source (TCS) and Annual Information Return (AIR) to the central system of TIN.

3. **e-TDS and e-TCS -**
   Since 2004-05, it has been made mandatory to file TDS returns electronically for the operators, the Government as well as corporate sector.

Other initiatives in Direct Taxation -

1. **e-Sahyog : Paperless Assessments -**
   The CBDT recently came up with a proposal for paperless income tax assessment over emails.

2. **Sevottam : Efficient Grievance Redressal -**
   The department is using 'Sevottam' platform that connects all income tax offices in the country.

3. **Faster refunds -**
   The IT Department is working towards processing and sending tax refunds within 10 working days.

4. **Pre-filled ITR forms -**
   An initiative to offer pre-filled forms which are automatically populated with user/taxpayer data and are downloaded with most information filled already.

5. **PAN Camps -**
   To increase coverage of the PAN, the government has been conducting PAN camps across India.

Indirect Tax Reforms -

The first indirect tax reform occurred in India when the Modified Value Added Tax (MODVAT) was introduced for selected commodities in 1986 to replace the Central Excise Duty. The states also followed suit and enacted the VAT acts to replace the sales tax with Value Added Tax.

1. Reduction in Customs Duties
2. Central Excise replaced with MODVAT and CENVAT (now)
3. Service Tax
4. Goods and Services Tax

MAKING QUALITY MEDICINES AVAILABLE TO THE COMMON MAN

It is an irony that even after 70 years of independence, only around 40 percent of the population are able to afford branded medicines. 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 Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana is dedicated to provide quality medicines at an affordable price to every citizen of the country, irrespective of caste, creed and economy.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana -

1. 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 Fertilisers, Government of India in November 2008 across the country.
2. The Scheme is being implemented through the Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI), Gurgaon, Haryana which is working under administrative control of Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, Government of India.
3. The scheme was renamed to 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana' in September 2015. The scheme was later again renamed as 'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' in December 2016.

Salient features of the Pariyojana -

1. Ensure access to quality medicines for all sections of the population.
2. Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
3. Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity.
4. Be a public programme involving Government, PSUs, Private Sector, NGO, Societies, Cooperative Bodies and other institutions.
5. Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability.
6. Generate employment by engaging individual entrepreneurs in opening of Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

Benefits to the Entrepreneurs -

1. Financial support of Rs 2.5 lakhs shall be extended where space is provided free of cost by State Government to operating agency.
2. Financial support of Rs 2.5 lakhs shall be extended to Government agencies where space will be provided free of cost in any government building owned by government bodies like Railways/State Transport Department/Urban Local Bodies/Panchayati Raj Institutions/Post Offices/Defence/PSUs etc.
3. PMBJK opened by any individual entrepreneurs shall be extended an incentive up to Rs 2.5 lakhs.
4. SC/ST and differently abled persons shall be benefited with free medicines worth of Rs 50,000/- in the beginning.
5. 700+ medicines and 154 surgical and consumables available in the basket for sale through PMBJK.
6. Central Warehouse adequately stocked with products.
7. Appointed 8 C&F Agents in different states and many more are in the pipeline for better supply chain management.
8. Appointed 54 distributors spread over different states for better availability.
9. Implemented end to end supply system for ensuring better supply.
10. Many State Government entered MoU for implementing PMBJP in their states.

Accessibility -

1. Number of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras functioning has reached more than 3,500 (spread over 33 states/UTs).
2. PMBJP Kendra now present in 584 districts out of the total 718 districts of the country.
3. Medicines available under PMBJP are priced 50-90 percent less than that of branded prices, leading to saving of around 400 crores to the citizens.

MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO BRIDGE THE URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE

Rural population predominantly relies on agriculture for livelihood. Rural development also envisages growth of non farm sector and development of infrastructural facilities in rural areas.
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 from 65 percent in 2011-12 to 60 percent in 2015-16.

Background -

The first ever National Agriculture Policy announced in 2000 sought to utilise 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 labourers' households, discourage migration to urban areas and face the challenges arising out of economic liberalisation and globalisation. 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 during 2007-08 and implemented in 482 districts of 19 states. 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.

Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana -

The scheme was introduced in the year 2007-08. The ultimate aim is to significantly increase the productivity and eventually maximise the returns of the farmers. The scheme aims at incentivising 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 -

It was launched in 2016 with an objective to provide a comprehensive insurance cover against failure of crops and help in stabilising the income of the farmer. It also encourages farmers to adopt innovative agricultural practices and ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector. PMFBY contributes to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness of agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.

National Agriculture Market (NAM) -

It 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. It 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 and at more reasonable prices.

Soil Health Management (SHM) -

National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) is implemented with the objective to make agriculture more productive, sustainable and climate resilient; to conserve natural resources; to adopt comprehensive soil health management practices; to optimise utilisation of water resources; etc. SHM aims at promoting Integrated Nutrient

Management (INM) through judicious use of chemical fertilisers including secondary and micronutrients in conjunction with organic manures and bio-fertilisers for improving soil health and its productivity; strengthening of soil and fertiliser 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 under Fertiliser Control Order, 1985; upgradation of skill knowledge of soil testing laboratory staff, extension staff and farmers through training and demonstrations; promoting organic farming practices etc.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) -

The major objective of PMSKY 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 wastewater for peri-urban agriculture and attract greater private investment in precision irrigation system.

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) -

Government launched PKVY 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) -

It is the national mission for financial inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM) -

National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was launched by Ministry of Rural Development in 2011. In 2015, the programme was renamed Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana. 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) -

It aims to strengthen Panchayati Raj system across the country and address critical gaps that constrain its success. RGSA seeks to enhance capacities and effectiveness of Panchayats and the Gram Sabhas, enable democratic decision-making and accountability in Panchayats and promote people's participation, strengthen the institutional structure for knowledge creation and capacity building of Panchayats, promote devolution of powers and responsibilities to Panchayats according to the spirit of the Constitution and the PESA Act, strengthen Gram Sabhas to function effectively.

Mission Antyodaya -

The mission of the scheme is a State-led partnership for rapid Rural Transformation to bring households out of poverty through diversification and development of multiple livelihoods. It aims at 'Poverty Quit India' by transforming 5000 Rural Clusters/50000 Gram Panchayats through cluster specific sustainable livelihood development.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) -

MGNREGS is a social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. The MGNREGS 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. MGNREGS is implemented mainly by Gram Panchayats on labour-intensive tasks like creating infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief and flood control.

Conclusion -

In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development, vibrant agricultural sector, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes and greater access to markets are needed. 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.