

Kurukshetra Summary March 2018

CITIZEN CENTRIC RURAL GROWTH

- The Department of Rural Development has been continuously trying to improve the quality of lives of rural poor households.
- Besides increased financial provision, the Department has undertaken far reaching governance reforms for promoting transparency, using the Socio-Economic Census – 2011 (SECC 2011), IT/DBT payment system, transaction-based programme MISs and space technology for geo-tagging of assets.
- The PMGSY set out to provide all weather road connectivity to 1,78,184 habitations of 500 population in plain areas and 250 population in hilly areas.
- Realising the importance of good wide roads to agriculture market (mandis), there is a need to consolidate the rural road network by providing for upgradation of existing selected rural roads based on their economic potential and their role in facilitating the growth of rural market centres and rural hubs.
- Prime Minister's dream of "New India 2022" requires connectivity and also consolidation of roads that connect markets, to enable farmers to get the benefit of markets.
- 15% of all PMGSY roads are now being taken up through use of innovative green technologies like use of waste plastic, geo-textiles, fly ash, iron and copper slag and cold mix. This not only reduces cost of construction, but also promotes use of local and 'waste' materials, thereby reducing carbon footprint.
- For diversifying livelihoods the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission has successfully brought more than 4.5 crore women into the fold of SHGs. Through capacity development and skill training, the Bank linkages for economic activities have expanded considerably in the last few years.
- This facilitates poor households coming out of poverty by increasing productive assets and incomes. Work with over 32 lakh women farmers is also going on for sustainable agriculture moving towards development of 1000 organic clusters. DAY-NRLM and MGNREGS along with Ministry of Agriculture will provide support for developing market infrastructure for these women SHGs, producer Groups and producer Companies.
- The DoRD has already started work on 5,000 Clusters spread over 50,000 Gram Panchayats in partnership with the State Governments to simultaneously address all the dimensions of poverty effectively. The DoRD develops skill for wage employment under DDUGKY and self-employment through Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETI) for over 7 lakh poor households every year.
- In the last Budget, announcement had been made regarding Mission Antyodaya bringing one crore households in 50,000 Gram Panchayats out of poverty.
- Efforts to develop 300 Urban clusters and nearly 1200 Saansad Adarsh Gram Panchayat is also part of the Mission Antyodaya thrust. Over 8000 Mission Antyodaya Gram Panchayats fall in 115 aspirational districts.
- Under the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), work is going on with over 32 lakh women Self Help Group Members for sustainable agriculture.

- In partnership with Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Rural Development, through its women Self Help Groups in Mission Antyodaya clusters, will work towards developing at least 1000 clusters for sustainable agriculture.

A Robust Accountability Framework:

- Building on the principle of eligibility through Socio-Economic Census 2011, and accountability through the multi-pronged framework of Social Audit, Financial Audit, Geo-tagging and use of IT-DBT, the programmes of DoRD have made significant framework with zero tolerance for corruption.
- Besides all transaction based MIS in the public domain that provides geo-tagged photos and real time information, efforts have been made to develop citizen centric apps like Gram Samvad, Meri Sadak, Awaas App etc. to improve the accountability to the people. The Department already had a system of National Level Monitoring Institutions that visit 600 districts of the country in two rounds each year and do a randomly selected sample verification of the work in the field. Besides this, a range of Research and Evaluation studies have been taken up on all flagship programme.
- CAG for social audit, with the guidance of the auditing standard of social audit have been notified for the first time and appropriate certificate programmes have been developed by NIRD& PR in partnership with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, for District, Block and Village Level Resources Persons. A policy decision was taken to have women Self Help Group members as the social Auditors after formal certificate programme for them.
- To assess the progress of programmes in States, the Department has introduced a system of Common Review Mission (CRM).
- The Department of Rural Development has also set up a small Internal Audit Wing which undertakes timely field verification of financial system from time to time and provides insights into the quality time to time and provides so that corrective action can be taken on time. One portal namely GRIP for online processing and analysis of internal audit has been developed and it is being used in internal audit of MGNREGA and PMAY(Gramin).
- To further improve the monitoring of progress in flagship priority programmes at the district level, the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (called DISHA in short) was constituted last year under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Members of Parliament. Representatives of State and Local Governments are also part of the Committee.
- TO facilitate effective monitoring of progress, the Disha portal has been developed where progress can be seen Gram Panchayat wise to ascertain where greater attention and support is needed.
- This will go a long way in improving the effective monitoring of programmes to ensure better and more meaningful outcomes.

STEPS FOR DOUBLE FARMERS INCOME

- With a view to provide a boost to agriculture production and promote inclusive growth, Union Budget 2018-19 has taken various initiatives to transform Indian agriculture to a sustainable of livelihood for the farmers.

Irrigation Sector:

- In India, only 68 million Ha (48 per cent of Net Sown Area) is currently under irrigation. The Union Budget 2018-19 has given foremost importance to Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) with the objective of 'Har Khet Ko Pani' and 'Per Drop More Crop'.
- It will create an additional irrigation potential of 44.5 lakh Ha in major and minor irrigation by December, 2019.
- With the objectives of 1.86 lakh Ha of additional area to be brought under irrigation during 2018-19, PMKSY-Watershed Development has been provided Rs. 2146.00 crore.
- The government has proposed to include 96 most water deprived districts with an allocation of Rs. 2600 crore where only less than 30 per cent of the land holdings covered are under irrigation.
- The Water use Efficiency (WUE) in Indian agriculture, at about 30-40 per cent, is one of the lowest in the world, against 55 per cent in China. This requires paradigm shift in conservation and in agriculture policies, which should lead to saving of water, fertilizer and energy resulting in crop diversification and equitable distribution of resources.
- Recognizing the importance of micro irrigation in the contemporary agriculture, the government has provided Rs. 4000 crore for the water saving induced technology adaptation under "Per drop More Crop".

Minimum Support Price (MSP):

- Addressing the issue of agrarian distress of farmers in India, the Union Budget has ensured MSP for all 23 crops with at least one and half times of their production cost (A2) plus the imputed value of family labour at prevailing wage rate (FL) cost A2 includes all expenses paid by farmers in cash or kind in production of the crop like seed, fertilizer, manure, chemicals, hired human, bullock and machine labour, irrigation expenses, maintenance cost, etc.

Operation Green:

- The government has launched "Operations Green" for onion, potato and tomato crops. It will promote FPOs, agri logistics, processing facilities and professional management with a budgetary allocation of Rs. 500 crores.

FPOs:

- FPOs remove hurdles in enabling farmers' access the markets, both as buyers and sellers, enable policy environment of investments in FPOs to leverage their collective production and marketing power FPOs are very important drivers for socio economic growth in the rural areas. Encouraging enabling environment for aggregation of farmers into FPOs will help take advantage of economies of scale.
- The 100 per cent tax deduction for FPOs with annual turnover of Rs. 100 crore will boost "Operation Greens" and "SAMPADA" Yojana. Also, organic farming will also be promoted under the cluster model by encouraging women self help groups, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and Village producer organizations (VPOs) to take up organic farming.

National Bamboo Mission:

- Recognizing the significance of Bamboo tree as a Green Gold, the government has launched a Restructured National Bamboo Mission, a sub scheme of Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), a 100 per cent Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Department of Agriculture & Cooperation (DAC), Ministry of Agriculture with an outlay of 1290 crore to promote bamboo sector in an inclusive manner.
- There is also a change in the definition of bamboo i.e. bamboo grown outside forest areas is removed from the definition of trees.

Agri-exports:

- India is the fourth-largest agri-export country that constitutes around 12.08 per cent (FY 2016-17) of the country's exports.
- The country's agricultural export are around \$ 33.38 billion at present against the potential of \$100 billion. To harness the optimum potential, the Union Budget 2018-19 has proposed to set up state-of-the-art facility in 42 mega food parks to facilitate agric produce to meet global standards through certification and Traceability. The government is also in the process of identifying and creating new markets for Indian agri products.

Agriculture Marketing:

- To strengthen and upgrading the agriculture marketing networks, the government has proposed to set up an Agri-Market infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore to develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets(GrAMs) and 585 APMCs using MGNREGA and other Government Schemes.

Food Processing:

- The allocation to food processing doubled to Rs. 1,400 crore and establishment of specialized agro processing financial institutions.

Agriculture Credit:

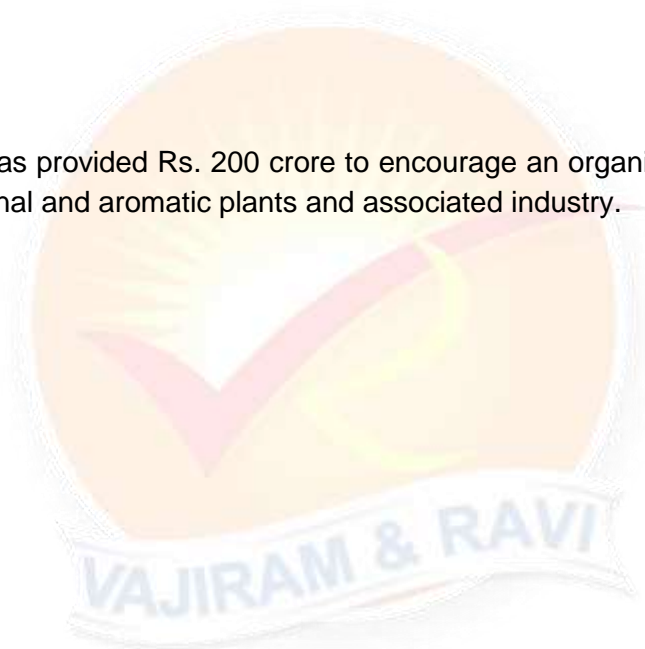
- Recognizing the multifold benefits of agricultural credit, the volume of institutional credit for agriculture sector has been raised from Rs. 10 lakh crore in 2017-18 and to Rs. 11 lakh crore for the year 2018-19.

Aquaculture and Animal Husbandry:

- To meet the required demand there is a need for government intervention to utilize the optimum potentials of aquaculture and animal husbandry. The government has proposed to set up Fisheries & Aquaculture Infrastructure fund and Animal Husbandry Infrastructure fund with a combined corpus of 10,000 crores.
- Further, the government has decided to provide Kisan Credit Card Benefit to fisheries farmers.

Other Initiatives:

- The government has provided Rs. 200 crore to encourage an organized cultivation of highly specialized medicinal and aromatic plants and associated industry.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT FOR RURAL YOUTH

- India today has the world's largest youth population and as the country strives to move towards a New India by 2022, the 75th year of India's independence, it is the youth of the country who have to take the great leap forward. The United Nations defines youth as persons in the age group of 15-24 years.
- While India's National Youth Policy, 2014 defines youth as those falling between 15-29 years, who constitute about 27.5 per cent of the populations, Labour Bureau defines youth as those falling in the age group of 18-29 years.
- The labour force participation rate (LFPR) of the youth was 48.5 per cent in rural areas and 36.2 per cent in urban areas in 2015-16.
- The unemployment rate sees a steady decline with progression in age. At the entry level (15-17 years) the unemployment rate is high at 13 per cent, in the prime of youth it decreases to 10.2 per cent and during the most productive period of 30 years and above the unemployment rate is almost below 1 per cent.
- A comparison of the participation of youth in the labour market across the last three annual surveys show that in the last survey, 2015-16, there was a decline in labour force and workforce participation rate as compared to 2013-14 and 2012-13 among the 18-29 age group. The unemployment rate increased to double-digit level as compared to 2013-14.
- The high rate of unemployment among youth with higher educational qualification raises the issue of quality of education/skilling rendered. Does our education address the employability of the youth or the jobs available do not match the aspirations of the youth or there could be a scarcity of jobs opted for by the youth?
- According to the ASER 2017 study conducted on 14-18 years old, it was found that a majority (42 per cent) were working, irrespective to being in formal education or not. Of these, almost 79 per cent were working in their parent's farm and three quarters of the youth surveyed were involved in daily household chores.

Current Initiatives in Skilling Rural Youth

- The country is faced with the task of imparting short-term certificate courses as well as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for those who are already employed. To address these issues, government has launched Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana & Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana.
- Training in self-employment is provided by Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) in more than 56 vocations.
- Project LIFE-MGNREGA, aims to improve the skill status of MGNREGA workers so that they can move from the status of partial employment to full employment.
- Under Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana of NRLM (DAY-NRLM), total of 56 lakh households were mobilized into 4.84 lakh SHGs.
- About 33 lakh Mahila Kisans were covered under Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) to provide agriculture based livelihoods.

- The Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana provides alternative source of livelihood to the members of SHGs by facilitating them to operate public transport services in backward rural areas in the form of e-rickshas, 3 and 4 wheeler motorised transport vehicles to connect remote villages with key services and amenities such as access to markets, education and health facilities.
- To promote entrepreneurship among the rural youth, Start-Up Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) is being implemented under DAY-NRLM.
- The Stand-Up India scheme aims to promote entrepreneurship among women and SC/STs.
- There has been an increase in credit off take through MUDRA scheme. The main loanees are women and those belonging to SCs, STs and OBCs.
- The Start-Up India programme was started in 2016 to build an ecosystem for nurturing innovations and entrepreneurship and thereby generate employment opportunities.

Union Budget Announcements 2018-19:

- The government will promote cluster based development of agri commodities especially horticulture crops.
- The initiative would require skilling rural youth in crop centric food processing techniques, storing, packing as well as in marketing. Such holistic agri-clusters at the districts would provide non-farm job opportunities closer home and dissuade rural youth from migrating to the cities for better job prospects.
- Organic farming in clusters is also to be promoted among women SHGs under the National Livelihood Programme.
- Kissan Credit Card facility has been extended to fisheries and animal husbandry farmers.
- The Kisan Credit Card facility also needs to cover fisherwomen selling fish as they remain indebted to the local moneylenders.
- Re-structured National Bamboo Mission with an outlay of Rs. 1290 crore announced to promote bamboo in a holistic manner.
- The target date for completion of phase-III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has been brought forward from 2022 to 2019.
- Durable assets such as roads, foods storage godowns, land development, vermi composts gramin housing, animal husbandry shelters etc are being created under MGNREGA.
- Under the Mega Food park Scheme, 12 Parks are proposed during the year which aims to provide direct and indirect employment.
- The government has increased its allocation for improving the social metrics of the 115 backward districts and make them the aspirational districts.
- It is proposed to extend fixed term employment to all sectors, In the last budget, fixed term employment was announced for the labour intensive apparel and footwear sectors. This move along with the government contribution of 12 per cent of wages towards EPF for the next three years would improve the quality of employment.
- To make skill aspirational among the youth, a model skill centre in every district of the country under the scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras has been proposed.

THRUST ON EDUCATION

- The Budget 2018-19 has made some key announcements in the education sector. Integration of the existing schemes, providing improved access to Schedule Tribes (STs), shift from regular blackboards to digital blackboards, revitalization of the infrastructure of the higher education institutions and fiscal accountability are the key highlights of the Union Budget 2018-19.
- The National Policy on Education (NPE) initiated a wide range of programmes for achieving the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The 1980s and 1990s witnessed several schematic and programme interventions, such as the Operation Black Board (OBB), Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), Mahila Samakhya (MS), Lok Jumbish Project (LJP), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for UEE across the country. This was further strengthened with the passage of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.
- The National Programme of Educations (1986) emphasized equitable access and the enrolment of girls, SCs and STs. The NPE and the Programme of Action (POA), 1992 while recognizing secondary education as a critical instrument for social change, called for its phased expansion.
- The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) scheme initiated in 2009, demonstrated the government's intent for a secondary education system that can support India's growth and development.
- The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education (CSSTE) initiated in 1987 primarily for improvement in the status and professional competence of teachers.

Merger of Schemes in School Education:

- The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education (CSSTE) are the three major flagship school education development programmes. While the SSA covers the elementary level (grades I-VIII), the RMSA covers grades IX-X.
- Interventions in SSA and RMSA are directed towards ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions; creating equal opportunities for schooling for all; strengthening school based management for school improvement; developing in children grade specific competencies and increasing the engagement of primary stakeholders in education.
- Although these Schemes have contributed significantly in promoting access, equality, quality and equity, but with time, parallel institutional arrangements at national, state, district and sub-district levels with little convergence with mainstream school education administration have been created for the planning and management of these Schemes. Hence, their scope and coverage remain segmented.
- Independent evaluations of the Schemes have suggested increased convergence and integration between the Schemes through a single school education development

programme covering grades I-XII. This would help in instilling allocative efficiency and optimal utilization of budgetary and human resources.

- Other advantages of this merger would be institutional capacity building, exploration of new digital initiatives for strengthening in-service and pre-service teacher training innovative pedagogy, integration of training structures, etc. This would strengthen the quality of teaching in schools across levels.
- This will also be in line with the ***Integrated B. Ed programme, another highlight of the Union Budget 2018***, which aims to improve the quality of teaching and training to make education a holistic process from pre nursery to class XII. It would be a combination degree in arts, science, and education course. This is a step to take care of the 13 lakh untrained teachers and to make the B. Ed programme more robust, practical, vibrant and focused. A digital platform for teachers is already in place through the portal DIKSHA, which will enable the teachers to train themselves, to boost their skill and upgrade their knowledge.
- Technology in classroom increases independent access and learning, provides greater choices for content delivery, increases self confidence, enhances communication, provides flexibility in teaching, learning and evaluating and gives immediate feedback. The initiative of digital blackboards is the need of the hour.
- The budget for all the three schemes will be merged into a single budget provision.
- This will be allocated amongst the states based on an index of requirements/performance. States would be expected to bring a single Plan for the entire school education sector. The Central assistance would be provided at all levels uniformly treating a school as a continuum. The thrust of the Scheme would be to support States to improve the quality of school education.
- Another step towards improving quality education is the scheme of **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** for ST students under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Touching on infrastructure, the Budget 2018 has made it clear that Centrally funded institutions (CFIs) such as IITs, IIMs, NITs, IITs and central universities will no longer receive budget grants for expanding and building new infrastructure. Instead, all infrastructure financing will be moved to the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), which was set up by the government last year to mobilise funds from the market and offer 10-year loans to CFIs, Under the new funding model, called **Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education or RISE**, the central universities and institutes will be able to borrow up to Rs. 1,00,000 crore in the next four years as compared to Rs. 10,000 crore which was given to CFIs each year.

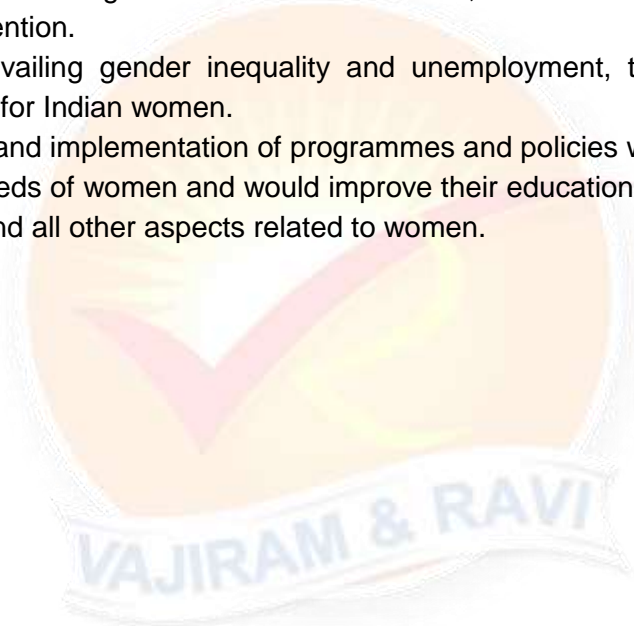
PROMISING BUDGET FOR WOMEN

- Just before the Budget was presented, Economic Survey of India was released that showed pressing issues of gender equality in the country.
- To bridge this gender gap, the budget ensured that reasonable funds are allocated for women in all ongoing schemes and programmes, and in all development activities. The government also increased the allocation to women specific programmes by 4 per cent for the next fiscal year.
- The Union Budget for 2018-19 has given due importance to women and child issues. The overall budget of the WCD Ministry has increased to Rs. 24700 crore. The Ministry had earlier introduced the outreach programme of ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0-6 year, to reduce the number of school drop outs, to fight malnutrition, mortality and morbidity existing among children. Expecting and lactating mothers' needs have also been taken care of under this scheme with allocation of Rs. 1100 crores. Under the umbrella of ICDS, the following schemes have been allocated funds.
- **Anganwadi Service** introduced by the government in 1975, is a centre where mother and child health care services are provided.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** is a Maternity Benefit Programme introduced for Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW& LM). Under this scheme, partial compensation is provided to mothers for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that they can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the child. However, the scheme is restricted to only one child per woman.
- In the present budget, the maternity leave has been increased up to 26 weeks.
- Further, to help women working in un-organised sector, Creches have been mandated to provide day-care facilities for children (6 months to 6 years) and also to improve nutrition and health status of children. The allocation of fund has been doubled in the present budget under **National Creche Scheme**, which is a laudable initiative.
- The **National Nutrition Mission (NNM)** has been allocated approximately Rs. 3,000 crores for the year 2018-19 with an aim to reduce the occurrence of stunting and under nutrition among children and the prevent anaemia among adolescents and women.
- **Child Protection Services** scheme was introduced to prevent children from all type of abuse, exploitation, neglect, discrimination, abandonment and separation from their families.
- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls(SAG)** was introduced to provide nutrition, hygiene and awareness about the reproductive health, to adolescent girls to take care of their physical, mental and reproductive health need.
- In addition, the following Women-Specific and Pro-Women Schemes designed to address issues of women and to provide them a safe and conducive environment for their overall development, were also allocated increased funds in this budget. **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Ujjwala.**
- Women's labour force participators rate in India is below 25 per cent, whereas globally it is 40 per cent'. To encourage women to join the formal sector, an amendment was proposed in the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. Women

employees' contribution in provident fund has been reduced to 8 per cent for the first three years of their employment against the existing rate of 12 per cent or 10 per cent.

- This move would help women employees in securing a higher take-home pay.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra** was established to provide “one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition”.
- It is a part of the Umbrella Scheme “Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women” of the Ministry of Women and Child development. Mahila Shakti Kendra under the above scheme has been allocated on enhanced budget.
- An allocation of Rs. 3 lakh crore for loans under the **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)**, has been announced.
- **Nirbhaya Fund** was announced in 2013 budget speech.
- Allocation for this is Rs. 500 crores to create one-stop facility for survivors of rape and sexual violence. Medical, legal and psychological assistance is given to the victims at one-stop centre.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements two shelter based schemes, namely, **Swadhar Greh Scheme** and **Short Stay Home** for providing emergency outreach services to women who do not have societal/family support or independent means of income.
- Under “**Working Women Hostel**” scheme, safe and affordable accommodation would be provided to working women, those under training and to girls attending professional courses.
- **The Swadhar Scheme** under Union Ministry of Women and Child Development was launched in 2002 for rehabilitation of women who live to difficult circumstances.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Lines (BPL) households with a support of Rs. 1600 per connection (in the name of women) in the next 3 years.
- Under this scheme, 5 crore LPG connections will be provided, which is proposed to be increased to 8 crore poor women.
- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social security. It consist of sub-scheme viz Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and Annapurna Scheme.
- There is a substantial increase (around 14 per cent) in the budget, which depicts the true functioning of a welfare state.
- Economic Survey of India has revealed presence of 21 million “unwanted” girls in India, because couples have “son preference” and would continue having children until they had a boy. Also there are 63 million women “missing” from India’s population because of sex selective abortion. **Beti Bacho, Beti Padhao (BBBP)** programme was introduced in October, 2014 to solve the problem of adverse Child Sex Ratio (CSR). For this programme, the allocation in 2018-19 budget has been increased.
- The Government has also set a target of providing 2 crores toilets under the **Swachh Bharat Mission** in 2018-19 which would directly impact the safety of women and girls.

- **The Pradhan Mantri Saubhagya Yojana** would provide free electricity to 4 crore household, which will have direct impact on the living conditions of women and children. Further, **Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women** would get Rs.1366 crores. The allocation for **Women Helpline** has been increased.
- Increased allocation of budget for women will help in addressing the socio-economic and health needs of women.
- In India, almost 66 percent of women fall under the “unpaid work” category. In the proposed budget, there should have been enhanced provision for providing skill training to women so that more opportunities get created for women in non-manual jobs.
- Also EPF contribution should have been optional for women as some women would like to save more. Further, tax on sanitary napkins should have been reduced to make it within easy reach to women from lower economic strata. Also social security scheme “MGNREGA”, which was primarily for women, did not get any significant increase.
- This budget allocated a large amount for health sector, however family planning aspect did not get enough attention.
- In the light of prevailing gender inequality and unemployment, this budget as a whole appears promising for Indian women.
- Proper monitoring and implementation of programmes and policies would ensure to fulfill the socio economic needs of women and would improve their education, safety, security, health, job opportunities and all other aspects related to women.



INITIATIVES FOR FARMERS WELFARE

- The Budget-2018 has main advantage over the previous budgets in terms of strengthening the market driven system instead of much focus on supply side of agricultural production.

Agriculture Priority in Various Budgets:

- In 2014-15, major thrust for agriculture sector had been in terms of facilitating Agri-tech Infrastructure, setting up of open Agriculture Universities in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan and Horticulture Universities in Telangana and Haryana. Also, the setting up of mobile soil testing laboratories along with soil health card to every farmer had remained the key focus. In years 2015-16, major focus has remained to support micro-irrigation.
- In year 2016-17, major thrust was for development of irrigation facilities in agricultural development. In 2017-18, the rural, agriculture and allied sectors experienced 24 per cent increase in allocation as compared to the previous year.
- The priority areas were to provide the insurance against crop loss, efficient management of water resource for agriculture, expansion of National Agricultural Market (e-Nam).
- The agriculture sector has been given an increase of 12.8 per cent in expenditure, the same as the last time. However, the rural sector allocation has seen a growth of 1.8 percent, comparatively much less than the 19 percent hike in the previous budget.

Boost to Agriculture Industry in the Budget:

- The Agricultural models differ across developed and developing countries. Developed countries have carried out the parallel reforms in agriculture as well as industrial sector. Those practices have brought out more market related activities, helped in resource allocation and put forth enormous scope for farmers to the incentivize for efficiency and productivity. However, same has been found missing in developing economics.

RURAL LIVELIHOOD AND EMPLOYMENT

- The Economic Survey 2017-18, tabled in the parliament, highlighted the importance of creation jobs in formal and informal sectors of the economy and boosting farmers' income in the next fiscal year. It also expressed its concern on the impending impact of climate change which may enhance stress levels of the country's monsoon-dependent agro-economy and prove to be a road block in achieving the government's goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

Allocation Trend for Rural Livelihoods & Infrastructure:

- The Budget called for a quick agriculture-led rural economic growth by allocating resources to important livelihood and rural infrastructure programmes.
- A review of trends in major items of expenditure indicates that allocation for social welfare activities have witnessed an increase of 14.5 per cent over the Revised Estimates (RE) of 2017-18, followed by Agriculture and Allied activities (12.8 per cent), education (3.8 per cent), health (2.8 per cent) and Rural Development (1.8 per cent).
- It indicates that priority has been accorded to Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, followed by Agriculture Research and Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Women and Child Development, Rural Development and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), in that order.
- The Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, however, witnessed a reduction of 11.3 per cent resource allocation in 18-19 over 17-18 (BE). This indicates a lack of resources absorption capacity of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare.
- The Budget has also assumed to ward off the adverse impact of demonetisation on input availability, market arrivals, market price fluctuations and demands of farm produce and increase in acreage under agriculture by targeting mitigation of production risk and price in agriculture.

Rural Employment:

- The Budget 2018-19 continued to underscore the importance of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) the existing two wage and self-employment programmes towards building quality and productive community assets and enterprises.
- The resource allocation of Rs. 55,000 crore to MGNREGA aimed at generating 230 crore person-days, creating 10 lakh assets and registering 60 lakh new works during 2018-19.
- National Rural Livelihood Mission has two important self-employment schematic interventions viz. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY) and Deen Dayan Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).
- To make NRLM a successful and sustainable intervention in the rural areas, appropriate diversification of economic activities and convergence with training, skill development and

placement oriented programmes of other Departments may be required by constituting convergence committees at State, District and Block level.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- As per Census 2011, rural areas of the country accommodate 68 percent of the populations. There are 6.4 lakh villages in India and rural areas account for a larger part of the geographical area in India.
- Rural infrastructure plays a key role in overall development of these areas by reaching the large section of rural poor. If rural infrastructure is deteriorated or is non-existent, the cost of marketing farm produce can be exorbitant for poor farmers. Poor rural infrastructure also limits the ability of the traders to travel to and communicate with remote farming areas, limiting market access from these areas and eliminating competition for their produce.
- The difference between the rural areas and urban areas of the country is mainly due to the accessibility of infrastructure facilities.

Impetus to Rural Economy:

- The focus of this years' Budget is mainly on strengthening of agriculture and rural economy.
- The Budget 2018-19 has proposed to spend Rs. 14.34 lakh crore including extra-budgetary and non-budgetary resources for creation of livelihood and infrastructure in rural India, aiming to create employment of 321 crore man-days, build more than 3 lakh km of rural roads, 51 lakh new rural houses, 1.88 crore toilets and provide 1.75 crore new household and provide 1.75 crore new household electric connections besides boosting agricultural growth.

Provisions towards Rural Livelihood & Infrastructure:

- The overall budget allocation to Ministry of Rural development has shown a 7 per cent increase over last year's Budget 2017-18.
- The Schemes like **National Livelihood Missions and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program** Have reported 28% and 15% increase over last year's budget respectively.
- The budget further provides for an increase in loans to Self Help Groups of women of about 37% over last year.

Rural Housing:

- By assessing the **rural housing** needs of the rural areas the budget provides for construction of 49 lakhs houses in year 2018-19 amounting to more than one crore houses under **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana scheme exclusively for rural areas.**

- A dedicated Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) in National Housing Bank is also proposed in the budget.

Rural Roads:

- PMGSY to provide 57,000 km roads & 28.35 crore man days. The Ambitious **Bharatmala Pariyojana** is proposed to provide seamless connectivity of interior and backward areas and border areas of the country with an estimated.

Rural Electricity:

- Rs.18800 crore including extra budgetary resources has been proposed under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) to provide (i) Intensive electrification of villages-1 lakh nos. (ii) Feeder segregation including new 11 kv Lines-1 lakh circuit km (ii) Commissioning of Substrations (New & Augmentation)- 600. The distribution of free LPG connections to 8 crore poor women under Ujjwala Scheme and Saubhagya Yojana covering 4 crore poor households with the electricity connection etc. are supposed to change rural landscape.

Rural Drinking Water & Cleanliness:

- The popular cleanliness drive through **Swachh Bharat Mission** has definitely benefited the poor sections of rural areas and school children became the face of the scheme by promoting awareness in their own families and peer groups.
- Budget provides for infrastructure creation through Piped Water Supply Schemes and Community Water Purification Plants- 84000 habitats under National Rural Drinking Water Scheme.

Rural Broadband:

- Under **Bharat Net Project** connecting one lakh gram panchayats through high speed optical fibre network has been completed due to which broadband access to 20 crore rural Indians has been made benefitting about two lakh fifty thousand villages.

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

- India's power sector is one of the most diversified in the world. Sources of power generation range from conventional sources such as coal, lignite, natural gas, oil, hydro and nuclear power to viable non-conventional sources such as wind, solar, and agricultural and domestic waste.
- India has moved up 73 spots to rank 26th in the World Bank's list of electricity accessibility in 2017.

- With oversupply in the conventional generation and falling prices of renewable, the Budget has tried to revive the demand by allocating higher amount for saubhagya scheme.
- The budget allocates Rs. 3,800 crore for Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) and Rs. 4,900 crores for Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS). The government has also allocated Rs. 16,000 crore for the Sahaj Biji Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya) to enable last mile connectivity for rural households. DDUGJY is targeted to be completed by May 2018 and Saubhagya scheme by March 2019.
- Under Saubhagya Yojana, 4 crore household are being provided with electricity connections.
- By providing new connections, efforts would be stepped up to provide better infrastructure, create a service line and other requirements. There is surplus electricity and this scheme would be a win-win for all including banks as it will help reduce NPAs due to better utilization of installed capacity, higher household income of connected households and be a social good.

- Allocation of Rs. 3,800 crores and Rs. 4,900 crores for Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDGJY) and Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) respectively.
- Allocation of Rs. 16,000 crore (of which Rs. 2,750 crore allocated in FY 2019) under “Saubhagya” Scheme to enable last mile connectivity for rural households.
- Mechanism proposed to buy surplus solar energy from solar pumps by the discoms at reasonable price
- Increased capex by Railways particularly for electrification & augmentation of line network.
- Allocation of Rs. 4,200 crore for capacity addition in wind power, solar power and green energy corridor.
- Measures proposed to facilitate the access to bond market for meeting the 25% of debt needs by large corporate, including those rated in “A” category.
- Reduction in corporate tax rate to 25% for entities with turnover of upto Rs. 250 crore.

- Many farmers are installing solar water pumps to irrigate their fields. Generation of solar electricity is harvesting of Sun by the farmers using their lands.
- This is an important move to cut down dependence on diesel pumps to irrigate crops and will help farmers to shift to solar power pumps. If the surplus electricity generated by the farmers is bought by discoms, it will help boost the country’s green economy.
- The Government is working on a plane targeted at farmers to generate 20 gigawatts (GW) of solar power. This involves setting up small solar projects of 1-2 megawatt (MW) size on fallow land and solarizing water pumps.
- The integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) was approved on 20th November 2014. IPDS envisages strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution network including metering at all levels in urban areas. The earlier scheme of Restructured Accelerated Power

Development and Reforms Programme (R-APDRP) has been subsumed in the new scheme of IPDS.

- The Union Budget also increased the capital expenditure by Indian Railways particularly for electrification and augmentation of the line network – a move that is likely to create additional power demand.
- The Government of India's focus on attaining "Power for all" has accelerated capacity addition in the country. At the same time, the competitive intensity is increasing at both the market and supply sides.

Ministry of Power with Department of Posts surveys electrification in five States

Out of the total 18.10 crore rural households in the country, around 14.16 crore households (78.24%) have been electrified. The status of the electrified rural houses in the States is updated by the respective State DISCOMs on the Saubhagya web-portal



MAKING DIGITAL RURAL INDIA

- One of the major initiative planned under Digital India included connecting the rural areas with high-speed internet network. The task of connecting one lakh gram Panchayat through high-speed optical fiber network has been completed under phase I of the BharatNet project which has enabled broadband access to over 20 crore rural Indians in about two lakh fifty thousand villages with 100 Mbps connections.
- As part of Digital India initiative, the government will be focusing on the development of stable and secure infrastructure, digital literacy and delivering government services through digital mediums.

Transforming Rural with Digital India

- The Government has also proposed to set up five lakh WiFi hotspots which will provide broadband access to five crore rural citizens.
- To make India a digitally empowered nation, the government has decided to connect even the far flung areas through the internet. While the overall Internet penetration in India is 33 percent, it is only 16 per cent in the rural areas;
- BharatNet will enable the country to generate more employment opportunities, improve service delivery of key initiatives like (online e-gram Panchayat services).
- High speed internet network can solve many problems for rural India. It can definitely improve the quality of education as through internet people would be able to get access to the best quality study material.
- Another area where broadband connectivity would bring a transformational change is the rural healthcare.
- With internet access, farmers would be able to know the weather forecast and would be able to sow the crops accordingly. They would also be able to get their crops sold on the actual rate prevailing in the market.

Taking Blockchain to the next level:

- The government has also shown its intent to explore the use of Blockchain technologies for establishing digital economy. Blockchain is a file system that creates blocks of transactions, called the distributed ledger in a multi-party system, where all parties have access to the ledger and known the nature of transactions in their chain. The use of this transactional technology is already been considered in the banking and insurance industries. And even the rural sector has a huge scope of transformation Blockchain.
- With high level of illiteracy and poverty in rural areas of India, land disputes are even more common. Blockchain technology can create permanent public ledgers for all kinds of property/land related transactions, making the database transparent and avoiding chances of duplicate records. When the land related transactions are on blockchain, all the parties involved-buyer, seller, broker, banks and the government can track the deal on real time basis.

GOBAR-DHAN SCHEME ANNOUNCED TO IMPROVE LIVES OF VILLAGERS

In an effort to make the villages open defecation free and improving the lives of villagers, the Finance Minister in his budget speech announced the launched of Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN). This will manage and convert cattle dung and solid waste in farms to compost, bio-gas and bio-CNG.

