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*C – Chennai; B – Bengaluru; D – Delhi ; H – Hyderabad; T – Thiruvananthapuram;
Policy to hasten piped gas infra on the cards

High-level panel to study all issues

S. K. Kaul

A national policy on City Gas Distribution (OGD) to speed up development of infrastructure for supply of piped natural gas to households as well as CNG for automobiles and industrial units is to come soon.

As a first step, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has formed a "high-level committee" comprising its sector officials and those of ONGC entities. The committee will undertake a detailed review of all the issues to expedite development of piped gas networks and draft such a policy.

The decision assumes significance considering challenges, especially delays in getting approval at the state level, that industry sources say ONGC entities in certain geographical areas (GAs) are facing.

The regulator also made a reference to such a situation, while inviting inputs for the draft policy.

Significant progress

The ONGC industry has witnessed significant progress in the last two years in terms of authorisation of GAs. PNGRB Secretary Vinod Bhatnagar said it in a note.

The number of such GAs has increased from 24 in 2017 to 229 as present, covering 75% of the country's population as against 20% two years ago.

Noting that most firms that were awarded authorisation had taken some steps for development of infrastructure, the regulator said various authorities at the Central and State governments as well as local authorities have "generally been helpful and working along with ONGC entities in resolving the issues."

Though the issues cited by the entities mostly come under the purview of the future government, it was felt that a national OGC policy would help in guiding the states to formulate their own policy, the PNGRB said.

The draft policy is expected to dwell on various aspects, including the appointment of a nodal agency/authority by State governments to co-ordinate for granting single window clearances in a time-bound manner.

An important aspect of the policy is likely to go into the standardisation of re-transmission services to ensure the country to ensure synergy in the process and to ensure availability of permits from the PNGRB.
**CNG Policy**

- Guide for states to formulate policy
- Leading to uniform policy
- Expeditions development of CNG infrastructure
- Provisions → Nodal agency/Officer - Single Window Clearance
  - Standardisation of road restoration, permission charges

**City Gas Distribution**

- Transportation and distribution of natural gas to consumers in different sectors through pipelines
- CNG Sector → 4 Segments
  - Auto-fuel
  - Commercial
  - Domestic
  - Industrial

**Natural Gas**

- Gas - naturally occurring gaseous hydrocarbon - primarily methane
- Odourless, colourless and lighter than air
- Few emissions - cleanest fossil fuel
- Superior fuel compared to coal & other liquid fuels
  - Environment friendly
  - Safer
  - Cheaper
- Supplied through pipelines - save space

**Uses**

- Power generation
- Feedstock for fertilizer plants
- Fuels for industrial use
- Heating, cooking

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**Compressed Natural Gas [CNG]**

- Gaseous fuel
- Viable alternative in automotive industry
  - Far-reaching environmental and economic implications
  - Safe as transportation fuel

**Piped Natural Gas (PNG)**

- Procured from oil or gas wells
  - Mild steel/polyethylene pipeline
  - To be used in various segments across country
**Aadhaar data: SC seeks govt. reply to petition**

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI
A Bench of Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde and Justice B.R. Gavai of the Supreme Court on Friday asked the Union government and the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to respond to a petition alleging that recent amendments to the Aadhaar law opened the back door to private players to access citizens’ personal data. The petition was filed jointly by former Army officer S.G. Vombatkere and activist Bezwada Wilson.

**Part A—Preliminary Examination**

Paper I - (200 marks)
- Current events of national and international importance.
- Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

**Part B—Main Examination**

PAPER-III
General Studies-II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.
- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

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**Important issues raised**

- S. Court judgment in Aadhaar case. (K.S. Puttaswamy case)
  - Struck down Section 57 of 2016 Act
  - It allowed private entities to use Aadhaar data for authentication
  - Violation of Right to Privacy
- Aadhaar Regulations, 2019
  - Commercialisation of Aadhaar data.
    - E.g.: Banks to get Aadhaar data for e-KYC at a price
  - Relegislation of Section 57 → Commercial exploitation of personal information + Private surveillance
Linking of Aadhaar database with database of PMLA, 2002 and Indian Telegraph Act, 1885
- Aadhaar database lacks integrity
- Threat to national security - A Trojan Horse

Earlier amendments to permit 'voluntary use' of Aadhaar to get mobile connections and open bank accounts → struck down by S.Court.

Offline verification system
- bypass authorities - unauthorized parties to replicate Aadhaar related data in various databases.

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GDP slump will hit $5 tn target, warns NITI Aayog

The road to a $5 trillion economy by 2025 is beset with many speed-breakers, the NITI Aayog has warned the government.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her July 5 Budget presentation, had said the government would work to make India a $5 trillion economy by 2025.

To begin with, the Aayog said nominal GDP growth—a measure of growth without accounting for inflation—has to be at least 12.4% on average if that target has to be reached, according to a presentation made by its CEO Amitabh Kant at the November 8 meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by former Union Minister and BJP MP Jayant Sinha.

The current rate was a mere 8% in the first quarter of the current financial year. The government is expected to release data for the second quarter (July to September) later this month.

Experts estimate that growth will dip in Q2 compared to Q1 in both real and nominal terms. While GDP growth in real terms in Q1 stood at 5%, state-run lender State Bank of India recently estimated that this could dip to 4.2% in Q2, with a corresponding dip in nominal growth as well.

Real GDP growth accounts for inflation. In his presentation, which The Hindu has accessed, Mr. Kant said “domestic investment and consumption” are the only dependable drivers for sustainable re-acceleration of the economy. “However, a deceleration in investment is visible, primarily in the household sector, due almost entirely to real estate,” he pointed out.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)
- Current events of national and international importance.
- Indian Polity and Governance—Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.
- Economic and Social Development—Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

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Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-IV

General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System—objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.
News

- NITI Aayog warned govt. on State of Indian Economy
- Hurdles in becoming $5 trillion economy
  1. Nominal GDP Growth
     - Q1 of FY 2019-20 → 8%
     - To achieve target → 12.4% on avg. required
     - Q2 of FY 2019-20 estimation
       - Dip in Nominal and Real GDP
       - Real GDP (Q2) → 5%
       - Real GDP (Q3) → estimated 4.2%

- Dependable driver of re-acceleration
  1. Domestic Investment
  2. Domestic Consumption
  2. Low Domestic Consumption
     - at a 40 year low
  3. Deceleration in Investment → HH Sector
     - due to real estate.
     - Gross Fixed Capital Formation
     - Dwellings, other buildings and structures → fell to 6.9% in 2017-18

Solution

- Structural changes
  - Eg. Power sector
  - High cross-subsidization in favour of residential tariff
  - NITI Aayog → Remove Cross-subsidy

4. Limited availability of capital with banks.
   + High NPA’s in Heavy Industry and Infrastructure.
The opacity around electoral bonds

If big money entirely funds elections in a secretive way, democracy as we know it does not exist.

The recent disclosures that the Election Commission (EC) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had expressed reservations about the Electoral Bonds scheme highlight the lacunae in India’s electoral governance. The Finance Minister wrote to the then Finance Minister that “allowing any entity other than the central bank to issue bearer bonds, which are currently like currencies, is fraught with considerable risk and unprecedented even with conditions applicable to electoral bonds.” The EC asserted that this would allow illegal foreign funds to be routed to political parties. At the same time, objections were raised to the idea of allowing electoral bonds to be sold through banks, as a major part of the Finance Bill so far it would not have to go through the rigours where the government would be a majority. There is no other country in the world where such a scheme exists.

Need for funds

But why is this important? After all, we have 550 million people in this country, and money is as important as any other election. This was not as recent as 50 years ago. Today, India needs more on the line than the U.S. with a per capita income of $5,000. Today, having more money does not guarantee victory, but at some other extreme, having no money certainly guarantees defeat. Some party may win a small election by very little, but winning victory over several elections becomes difficult to achieve. To facilitate such electoral bonds, one needs to have the right kinds of headings and acronyms on prominent economic and social issues. They hold elections rolls. They need huge sums to pay party workers. In India, there is the added exposure of buying votes through distribution of gifts, money, liquor and so on. Given that money is required, a central issue is whether a winner in any election can be said to represent the public or for those who have funded them. Some countries have public funding of elections. Campaign funding rules and reforms are a consistently evolving subject internationally. They focus on public funding, limits on expenditures, limits on donations, transparency in funding and pedagogy for nonincumbents. We need to look at the issue of electoral bonds in this context.

Campaign funding rules and reforms are a consistently evolving subject internationally. They focus on public funding, limits on expenditures, limits on donations, transparency in funding and pedagogy for nonincumbents. The gaps between the stated purpose of the electoral bonds scheme and the manner in which they are implemented are significant. The rules must be designed to help, not hinder. The purity of the electoral bonds scheme and the mechanism for funding the political parties is essential to ensure that the political parties are not only transparent but also accountable to the electorate. Campaign funding rules and reforms are a consistently evolving subject internationally. They focus on public funding, limits on expenditures, limits on donations, transparency in funding and pedagogy for nonincumbents. The gaps between the stated purpose of the electoral bonds scheme and the manner in which they are implemented are significant. The rules must be designed to help, not hinder. The purity of the electoral bonds scheme and the mechanism for funding the political parties is essential to ensure that the political parties are not only transparent but also accountable to the electorate.

Whether this will be used as black money in elections is unknown. In short, electoral bonds cannot eliminate black money and unreported income. The electoral bonds scheme and the amended Finance Act, 2017 have caused considerable controversy. All of them were there earlier as well. In India, it is possible for these to succeed in hiding all. However, it is not always the case that in order to hide all, they need to hide all. Any political party can voluntarily choose to disclose its funds and sources. There is no law that prevents them from doing so. They can also stop publicising that they will not disclose their funds, but the party itself has to choose to do so. In India, it is possible for these to succeed in hiding all. However, it is not always the case that in order to hide all, they need to hide all. Any political party can voluntarily choose to disclose its funds and sources. There is no law that prevents them from doing so. They can also stop publicising that they will not disclose their funds, but the party itself has to choose to do so.

PAPER-IV


- Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security, money-laundering and its prevention.

PAPER-V

General Studies- IV: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

- Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems; ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions; laws, rules, regulations and conscience as sources of ethical guidance; accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; corporate governance.

- Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen’s Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
Electoral Bond Scheme

- Electoral Bonds - Bearer Banking instrument
  - Negotiable instrument
  - To fund political parties
  - Will not bear the name of the donor
  - Donor and party details available with the bank
    ⇒ ‘ANONYMOUS DONATIONS’

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Editorial

- Money is required for the political parties to reach the voters
  - Electoral Bonds Scheme

- Political funding in other countries
  - Public funding

- Campaign funding laws
  - Public funding
  - Limits on Expenditure
  - Limits on donations
  - Transparency in funding
  - Penalties for non-compliance.

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Disadvantages of Electoral Bonds

- Ruling Party can use the ‘anonymity’ to demand donations for it.
  - Prevent donations to other political parties.

- Ruling party can misuse the law enforcement agencies to harass those who donate to rival political parties, since it has the data.

- Law agencies can obtain the information from the banks

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- No donation limits for the electoral bonds
  - Advantage for the ruling party

- Chances of illegal foreign funds to be given to political parties.
  - ‘Bearer instrument’ should be issued by the central bank

- Long term effect → Democracy will not sustain.
Way forward:

- Government needs to act on the recommendations for various remedies given by various commissions on reforming the Electoral Bond Scheme.

- India needs to benchmark itself against the best international practices and laws on campaign funding.

- Principles
  1. Complete transparency in all the funding
  2. Political parties need to be under RTI Act.

- Need for spending limits and donation limits

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Dam-hit families to get solatium for crop loss

Staff Reporter

Families affected by the Sardar Sarovar Dam called off their sit-in here on Thursday night, following a string of assurances by Surendra Singh Baghel, Madhya Pradesh Tourism and Narmada Valley Development Minister, and senior bureaucrats. Damaged crops will be compensated for, relief camps will be set up in Alirajpur district and bridges and roads will be built to reach swathes cut off from the mainland, the government has said. Narmada Bank...

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Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)

- Current events of national and international importance.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

PAPER-IV


- Disaster and disaster management.
**River Narmada**

- **Life line of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh**
- **Origin**: Amarkantak plateau, M.P.
- **Mouth**: Gulf of Khambat (Arabian Sea), Gujarat.

![Map of India showing the Narmada River](source: mapsofindia.com)

**Sardar Sarovar Dam**

- **Located in Gujarat**
- **Foundation**: 1961 - Jawaharlal Nehru
- **Narmada Bachao Andolan**: 1990s
- **Movement of tribals, farmers and environmentalists**

**Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal - 1969**

- **Sharing of water**: between Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan
- **Narmada Control Authority - 1980**
- **Filling of Sardar Sarovar dam due to heavy rains**
  - villages in the upstream affected by flood
- **Protesting families called off protests**
- Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA)
  - Constituted in 1985, under Govt. of Madhya Pradesh
  - Objectives
    - For planning water resources management
    - Expeditious implementation of projects
    - Exploit enormous water resources
  - Have jurisdiction over the development projects
  - Ensures proper rehabilitation
    - Minimize negative impacts on environment

PRACTICE QUESTIONS
DISCUSSION
Practice Question – Prelims
Q1. With reference to River. Narmada, consider the following statements.

1. The Narmada River basin lies only in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
2. According to the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT), Narmada water is shared among Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

Select the correct statements from the codes given below,
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Practice Question – Prelims
Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to the ‘Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)’.

1. It is a statutory body.
2. The board regulates the production, refining, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, marketing and sale of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas to ensure uninterrupted and adequate supply of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas in all parts of the country.

Which among the above statements is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Practice Question – Prelims
Q3. Consider the following statements.

1. Natural gas is a superior fuel as compared with coal and other liquid fuels.
2. The Ignition temperature of Petrol is much higher than Natural Gas.

Which among the above statements is/are incorrect?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Practice Question – Prelims
Q4. Consider the following statements about Electoral Bonds.

1. It is a bearer Banking Instrument to be used for funding all the Political Parties in India.
2. The maximum limit for Donation in Electoral Bonds is Rs 10 lakh.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
Practice Question – Mains
GS-II
Q. ‘Free and fair elections require clean and transparent funding’. In this context, define what is meant by Electoral Bonds? Do you think that the ‘Electoral Bonds Scheme’ is a move in the right direction for a democracy like India? Suggest ways to increase the transparency in the funding process in the elections. (250 words, 15 marks)

Practice Question – Prelims
Answers
Q1. Option ‘c’ - Both 1 and 2
Q2. Option ‘c’ – Both 1 and 2
Q3. Option ‘b’ - 2 only
Q4. Option ‘c’ – Both 1 and 2

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