

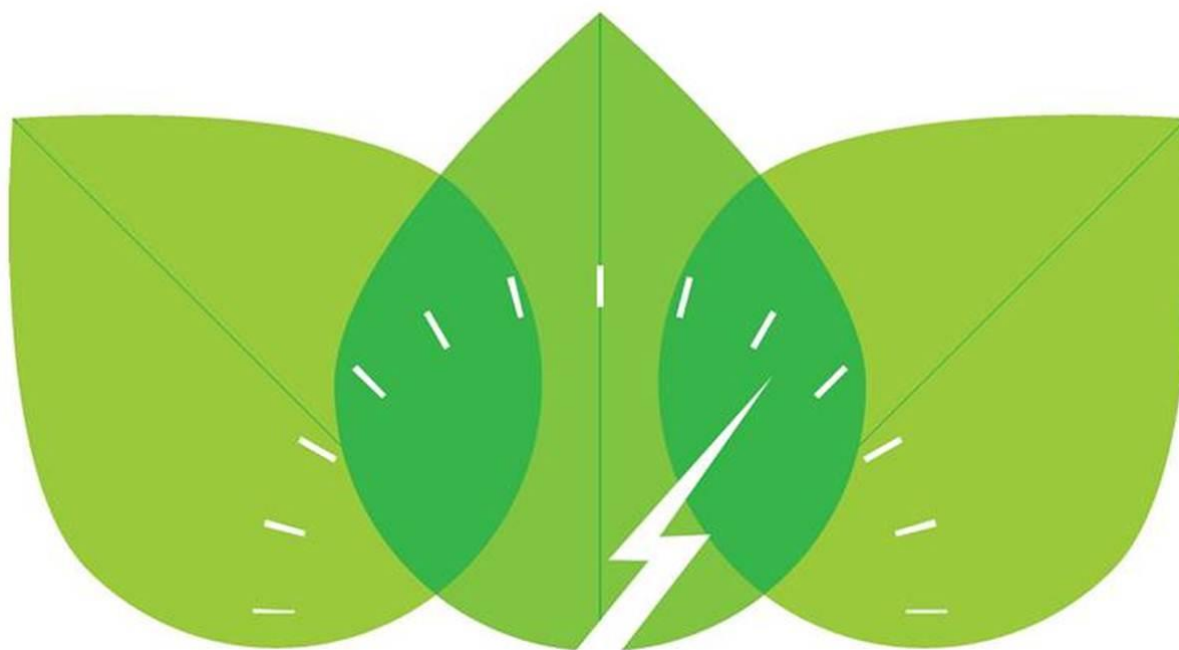
UPSC EDITORIAL ANALYSIS 21 JUL 2021

EDITORIAL 1: INDIA NEEDS AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS THAT CAN ALSO AID GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION

Topic: General Studies Paper 3 (Economic Growth)

Context:

- In getting V-shaped economic recovery Large demand stimulus is necessary.
- A green stimulus can create demand, address air pollution and accelerate the green energy transition.
- Green stimulus means it combines crisis spending to restart the economy with environmental objectives in mind.
- After diwali, the burning of rice crop residue in northern India will create an air pollution crisis. It can be avoided by procuring all the crop waste at a remunerative price.



Briquettes:

- This waste can be converted into briquettes (compressed block of coal dust), that can be substituted for coal in thermal power stations.
- National Thermal Power Corporation Pvt Ltd (NTPC) has already done this successfully without adding the cost of generation of the coal, as the cost of briquettes is comparable to that of coal in energy terms.

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- The crop waste for conversion into briquettes can be given to private entrepreneurs. This would be given to many private investment for conversion would take place, creating more demand for the conversion equipment, labour and transport.
- Air pollution would be reduced without any cost to the government.

Electric Vehicles:

- Electric vehicles do not cause air pollution these are also considerably cheaper to run on a life cycle per km basis. But there is no demand rising because of the lack of charging infrastructure.
- If charging infrastructure is not created in residential and office complexes, demand for EVs will not pick up and the investment on charging stations would not generate returns — a classic chicken-and-egg conundrum.
- A national programme is called to build charging stations in all cities. This can be financed fully through a central government guaranteed debt.
- This will create demand stimulus across the country, for EVs and their manufacturing supply chain.
- The purchase of electric buses for bus services may also be fully financed through government guaranteed debt. This move of government can help in creating a demand stimulus, and would also lead to substantial improvement in air quality in our highly polluted cities.

Renewable energy:

- India is going well beyond its commitment under the Paris agreement to aim for 450 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- The easy way to achieve progress is to have a national policy guidance for the states to get electricity distribution companies to announce a remunerative price (feed-in tariff) with which they would buy solar power in the kw range from the rural areas.
- This was also indicated in the FM's budget speech and also needed to be followed. This would not need transmission investments.
- By the national policy guidelines distribution companies would save money as their actual cost of delivering power in the rural areas is well over Rs 7 per unit whereas a remunerative feed in tariff for solar power could be around Rs 4 per unit.
- For irrigation farmers can be provided easily with solar power generated in a village this would also facilitate more efficient use of water.
- If we generate 1 MW from a village, then with 6 lakh villages, there is a potential of 600 GW capacity creation. This kind of programme can generate widely dispersed private investment and increased incomes.
- Germany used a feed-in tariff with great effect in order to become a global leader in the use of solar power.
- Now the modernization, all households are getting LPG stoves and cylinders and have already got electricity connections, cow dung is no longer required for cooking.
- It can be converted in small village-level plants to gas that can be used as a fuel for cooking and transport, or, to generate electricity.

- A government-promoted system for procurement of this gas, or electricity generated from this gas, at a remunerative price will create the right incentives for private investment and income generation across all the villages.

Conclusion:

- ✓ The largest cattle population in the world is in India so the goal should be to convert all the cow dung into useful commercial energy. This can also refer to cross-subsidy.
- ✓ Cross-subsidy was also used to get the National Solar Mission going. Costs have since fallen dramatically.
- ✓ These are some of innovative and affordable pathways for a green stimulus that create dispersed demand and jobs with large multiplier effects

Reference:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-economic-stimulus-green-energy-transition-7414283/>

EDITORIAL 2: PEGASUS IS INDIA'S WATERGATE MOMENT

Topic: General Studies Paper 3 (Cyber Security)

Context:

- Today, Intelligence capacity has developed so much that even if the Government wants to establish a dictatorship there would be no way to fight back because the most careful effort to combine in resistance to the government, even the private effort is within the reach of the government to know.
- Frank Church, who led one of two committees on intelligence and surveillance reform established in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, after extensive surveillance reveals that unclear by whom, but it may be the Indian government who has introduced the use of spyware on people's phones.
- The international regulation of the unaccountable sale of spyware has to be applied to India too.

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Go easy on the salt

- Just as a small amount of salt is necessary for the body, A small amount of surveillance is necessary for the health of the body politic, in excess, both are dangerous.
- One cannot enjoy the liberties provided under the Constitution without national security, similarly, national security is not meaningful if liberties aren't enjoyed.
- Excessive and unaccountable surveillance hinders privacy, freedom of thought, of speech, and has a negative effect on people's behaviour, shattering the bedrock of the rule of law upon which a constitutional liberal democracy is built.
- According to The government all its surveillance is authorised and justified, but if that's the case, then why are prosecutions for terrorism, organised crime, espionage, etc., not executed based on evidence from such surveillance?
- Instead of appropriate surveillance, There are numerous examples of surveillance powers being misused for personal and political gain, and to harass opponents.

Earlier examples

- In 2012, The new Government of Himachal Pradesh raided police agencies to recover over lakh phone conversations of thousands of political members, and many senior police officials, including the Director-General of Police (DGP), who is legally responsible for conducting phone taps in the State.
- In 2013, India's current Home Minister was involved in Scam "Snoopgate", where the phone recordings alleged to be of him speaking to the head of an anti-terrorism unit to conduct

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covert surveillance on a young architect and her family members without any legal basis was exposed.

- Later, the Gujarat government admitted the surveillance of Snoopgate including phone tapping but claimed that it was done at the request of the Chief Minister by the woman's father.
- However, There was no order signed as there was no legal necessity for a phone tap.
- later on, the Gujarat High court shut down an inquiry into "Snoopgate" upon the request of the architect and her father, on the shocking basis that it "did not involve public interest".
- In 2009, the United Progressive Alliance government admitted in the Supreme Court that the CBDT had placed PR Professional Niira Radia, under surveillance due to fears of her being a foreign spy. Though her real identity was identified, they did not prosecute her for espionage.
- In Meghalaya too, the Private Company Essar group was engaged in illegal surveillance by misusing police contacts to tap phone calls of "opponents in trade or estranged spouses".
- There are various other examples of unlawful surveillance which were conducted for political and personal gain and have nothing to do with national security or organised crime.
- Even after such illegal surveillance was identified, only a few people were held legally accountable.

The laws

- Currently, Section 92 of the CrPC (for call records, etc), Rule 419A of the Telegraph Rules, and the rules under Sections 69 and 69B of the IT Act authorise interception and monitoring of communications.
- Already there is a limited number of agencies for monitoring and interception, within that it's unclear when the Telegraph Act applies and when the IT Act applies.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs in 2014, designated nine central agencies and the DGPs of all States and Delhi to conduct an interception under the Indian Telegraph Act.
- In 2018 too, under Section 69 of the IT Act, nine central agencies and one State agency were authorised to conduct intercepts.
- However, the Intelligence Organisations Act, which restricts the civil liberties of intelligence agency employees, has listed only four agencies.
- while the RTI Act lists and exempts 22 agencies as "intelligence and security organisations established by the central government".
- Also, there is an unauthorised surveillance alphabet soup with programmes such as CMS, TCIS, NETRA, CCTNS, which are not according to the terms of 2017 K.S. Puttaswamy judgment.
- According to the Judgement, invasion of privacy could only be justified if it satisfied three tests: first, the restriction must be by law; second, it must be necessary (only if other means are not available) and proportionate (only as much as needed); and third, it must promote a legitimate state interest (e.g., national security).
- In 2010, then Vice-President Hamid Ansari called for a creation of a standing committee of Parliament on intelligence to ensure that they remain accountable and respectful of civil liberties.

- In 2011, the Cabinet Secretary on surveillance held that the Central Board of Direct Taxes having interception powers were in violation of a 1975 Supreme Court judgment on the Telegraph Act.
- Later, Manish Tiwari a Parliamentarian, introduced a private member's Bill to bring intelligence agencies under a legislative framework but the Bill soon lapsed.
- In 2013, the Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis published a report, "A Case for Intelligence Reforms in India", which recommended that intelligence agencies in India must be provided with a legal framework for their existence and functioning and they must be under the oversight and scrutiny of parliament.
- In 2018, the Srikrishna Committee on data protection noted that after the K.S. Puttaswamy judgment, most of India's intelligence agencies are "potentially unconstitutional", not passed under the statute of the parliament, except the National Intelligence Agency.
- The Indian National Congress party was the first party that called for parliamentary oversight of intelligence agencies in its 2019 election Manifesto.

Post-Watergate reforms

- The Snowden revelations of 2013 did not uncover any spying on Opposition politicians, journalists, judges, and human rights defenders for partisan political ends.
- It revealed the extent of NSA's surveillance, the overreach of the powers provided under the PATRIOT Act, and the lack of sufficient checks and balances provided by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.
- After the Snowden incident, there were meaningful reforms and controversial domestic surveillance provisions of the PATRIOT Act expired in 2020.

Conclusion:

- ✓ India too needs meaningful reforms, which are aimed at professionalising intelligence gathering.
- ✓ By bringing intelligence agencies under parliamentary oversight, making them non-partisan, and ensuring that civil liberties and rule of law are protected the Government could have a check on India's excess and Misuse of Intelligence and Technology.
- ✓ Time is ripe for India's Watergate moment, and the Supreme Court and Parliament should seize it.

Reference:

Pegasus is India's Watergate moment: <https://thg.page.link/cJgimXNvvk7FVtmR6>

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