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Q1. India has had a long tradition of combating role of women. Elucidates. However, the recent debate of participation of women in combating role requires attitudinal change. Examine.

Introduction

Feminine strength and power have always been celebrated and worshipped in the Indian society. Even today we celebrate Durga and Chandi a symbol of victory of good over evil. Women have never shied away from taking swords in hands to defend their motherland.

History of women in combating roles

- Rani Rudrama Devi was a monarch of the Kakatiya dynasty in the Deccan Plateau who successfully ruled her kingdom and participated in several combative roles.
- Razia Sultana, the only women monarch of Delhi Sultanate used to dress like a male. She heroically fought with rebellious factions of his empire.
- Rani Durgawati fought heroic battle with the Mughal forces. On being told the strength of Mughal forces the Rani maintained that it was better to die respectfully than to live a disgraceful life.
- Kittur Chennama led armed rebellion against British East India Company in Mysore.
- Rani Laxmibai fought in the revolt of 1857. She was paid tribute by her adversary Hugh Rose who later wrote- She was a "**man** among mutineers".
- During the national movement we find many women revolutionaries like Bina Das, Preetilata Wadedar and Kalpana Dutt.
- In INA there was a women's regiment- the Rani Lakshmibai Regiment led by Captain Lakshmi Sahgal.

In a country which has history of women in combat roles it was regressive to consider them unfit for the job because of the societal gender bias. Indian women have proven their mettle as successful CEOs of multinational companies, playing leading role in the Mars mission or Chandrayan mission, travelling the space and successfully leading the country.

The Supreme Court directions

- The SC ruled in February that women could serve as army commanders, dismissing the government's stance that male soldiers were not ready to accept orders from female officers as "disturbing".
- The Supreme Court also ordered the government to extend permanent service - which has only been applicable to men so far - to all women officers, signalling a move towards gender parity in the traditionally male bastion.
- With this women will get the same opportunities and benefits as their male colleagues, including ranks, promotions and pensions, and be allowed to serve longer tenures.
- The SC observed, "To cast aspersions on their abilities on the ground of gender is an affront not only to their dignity as women but to the dignity of the members of the Indian Army".

Currently women are inducted through a short service commission that lets them work for up to 14 years, and only allowed permanent commission in the army's legal and educational wings.

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Need for attitudinal change:

- The government had opposed the move saying most soldiers were men from rural backgrounds who were not "mentally schooled to accept women officers in command".
- The government also argued that men and women officers were physically different and could not be treated equally.
- The top court rebuked the government, describing its views as "disturbing" and urged "the need for change in mindsets to bring about true equality in the army".
- This is a landmark judgment which will change how we look at women. Society generally thinks women as dependant and undermines their capabilities.
- We cannot deny women their rightful position because the 'society is not ready'. The decision by SC will raise the dignity of women and can usher change in societal attitude.
- Australia, Germany, Israel and the United States already allow women to take on combat roles. India as a progressive nation having one of the best armies must bring in this parity.

Conclusion

Thus we have seen that it is not the capability of women which is keeping them away from combative roles rather it is the societal mindset. The 21st century is the age to bring in gender neutrality and allowing women in combative role will bring in parity and raise their dignity.

2. India needs a sustainable GDP rate of 7-8% per year to achieve a five trillion economy by 2024. Do you think Atma Nirbhar Bharat can give that impetus to attain the target? Give arguments in support of your stand.

The size of the India economy is currently around Rs 190 lakh crore (GDP at current market prices, 2018-19) which comes out to be \$2.8 trillion, converting it in dollar terms taking average exchange rate of the financial year. This means the Indian economy needs to almost double its size in next five years to realize the target of reaching the \$5 trillion mark.

To achieve this target India needs to grow at an annual average growth rate of 7-8 per cent in dollar terms for the next five years.

However Covid-19 has emerged as the biggest impediment to India's ambition for becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2024. In order to spur India's growth and overcome the economy from pandemic challenges the government announced a special economic package of Rs 20 lakh crore (equivalent to 10% of India's GDP) under Atma Nirbhar Bharat with the aim of making the country independent against the tough competition in the global supply chain and to help in empowering the poor, labourers, migrants who have been adversely affected by COVID.

This economic reform prospect in various sectors will boost India's demand driven economy and give impetus to achieve the 5 trillion dollar economy target:

❖ Business sector

1. **Collateral free loans for businesses:** All businesses (including MSMEs) will be provided with collateral free automatic loans of up to three lakh crore rupees.

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2. **Corpus for MSMEs:** A fund of funds with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore will be set up for MSMEs. This will provide equity funding for MSMEs with growth potential and viability.
 3. **Subordinate debt for MSMEs:** This scheme aims to support stressed MSMEs which have Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). Under the scheme, promoters of MSMEs will be given debt from banks, which will be infused into the MSMEs as equity.
 4. **Employee Provident Fund (EPF):** Under the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, the government paid 12% of employer and 12% of employee contribution into the EPF accounts of eligible establishments. This is estimated to provide liquidity relief of Rs 2,500 crore to businesses and workers.
 5. **Street vendors:** A special scheme will be launched within a month to facilitate easy access to credit for street vendors. Under this scheme, bank credit will be provided to each vendor for an initial working capital of up to Rs 10,000. This is estimated to generate liquidity of Rs 5,000 crore.
 6. Special refinance facilities worth Rs 50,000 crore were announced for NABARD, SIDBI and NHB at policy repo rate.
- ❖ **Agriculture and Allied sectors: In order to boost rural economy and demand**
1. **Concessional Credit Boost to farmers:** Farmers will be provided institutional credit facilities at concessional rates through Kisan Credit Cards. This scheme will cover 2.5 crore farmers with concessional credit worth two lakh crore rupees.
 2. **Agri Infrastructure Fund:** A fund of one lakh crore rupees will be created for development of agriculture infrastructure projects at farm-gate and aggregation points.
 3. **Emergency working capital for farmers:** An additional fund of Rs 30,000 crore will be released as emergency working capital for farmers. This fund will be disbursed through NABARD to Rural Cooperative Banks (RCBs) and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) for meeting their crop loan requirements.
 4. **Support to fishermen:** The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) will be launched for integrated, sustainable, and inclusive development of marine and inland fisheries.
 5. **Animal Husbandry infrastructure development:** An Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund of Rs 15,000 crore will be set up, with the aim of supporting private investment in dairy processing, value addition, and cattle feed infrastructure.
 6. **Employment push using CAMPA funds:** The government will approve plans worth Rs 6,000 crore under the Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) to facilitate job creation for tribals/adivasis.
- ❖ **Increase in borrowing limits:** The borrowing limits of state governments will be increased from 3% to 5% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for the year 2020-21.

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This is estimated to give states extra resources of Rs 4.28 lakh crore and states will be able to boost their economy by investment and demand creation.

❖ **Migrant Workers:**

1. One Nation One Card: Migrant workers will be able to access the Public Distribution System (Ration) from any Fair Price Shop in India by March 2021 under the scheme of One Nation One Card.
2. Free food grain Supply to migrants: Migrant workers who are not beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act ration card or state card will be provided 5 kg of grains per person and 1 kg of chana per family per month for two months.
3. Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) for Migrant Workers / Urban Poor

❖ **Civil Aviation:**

1. Public Private Partnership (PPP) model for airports: World-class airports will be built through the PPP model.
2. Efficient airspace management: This is estimated to allow optimal utilisation of airspace, reduction in fuel use, and time, and save about Rs 1,000 crore per year for the aviation sector.

❖ **Defence:**

1. FDI limit in defence manufacturing under automatic route will be increased from 49% to 74%.
2. A list of weapons/platforms will be released which will be banned for import based on a year wise timeline in order to boost indigenization and export.

❖ **Housing, other infrastructure and social sector:**

1. **Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme for Middle Income Group (MIG)**
2. **Support to the real estate sector:** An extension of six months will be given on registration and completion dates of all registered projects expiring on or after March 25, 2020 without individual applications.
3. **Public health:** The investment in public health will be increased along with investment in grass root health institutions of urban and rural areas. The National Digital Health Blueprint will be implemented, which aims at creating an ecosystem to support universal health coverage in an efficient, inclusive, safe and timely manner using digital technology.
4. **Allocation for MGNREGA:** To help boost rural economy, an additional Rs 40,000 crore will be allocated under MGNREGS.
5. **Technology driven education:** PM eVidya will be launched for multi-mode access to digital/online education. This program will include facilities to support school education in states/UTs under the DIKSHA scheme (one nation, one digital platform).

The steps taken will definitely boost demand and increase the prospect of 5 trillion dollar economy. Along with the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, government has also modified its some of its legislative laws to attain the defined target and to achieve it at a specified time but much more need to be done like, reform in labour laws, reform in agriculture and infusion of state of art technology in agriculture, more emphasis on climate resilient agriculture to ensure

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sustainable development, ensuring more participation of women in the workforce, revamping educational policy and giving emphasis on vocational education, skill development, greater research and development in various emerging fields like artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc. Some of the sectors like renewable energy, recycling, green buildings, sustainable forestry management, agroforestry, small scale sustainable farming, organic farming, mass vehicle industry like the bicycle industry can be looked for creating green jobs. These collective steps will make the dream of 5 trillion dollar true.

3. North East India has the potential to become a major trade center of the country. Critically analyse this statement with reference to Government of India's initiative in this direction.

India's North Eastern Region (hereinafter NER) has 9 percent of India's geographical area and contributes 3 per cent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In relative terms, it is one of India's economically laggard regions. However, given its natural resources base and strategic location, NER has the potential to become India's "powerhouse" in terms of trade and investment.

Why does North East India have the potential to become a major trade center of the country?

- ★ NER is unique in terms of the economic opportunities it offers. About 98 percent of the region's borders form India's international boundaries; it shares borders with China, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar.
- ★ Given its strategic location, the region can be developed as a base for India's growing economic links not only with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) but also with neighbouring countries, viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.
- ★ North east India is called as gateway to the east, because of its interconnectedness with east and south east asian economies.
- ★ North east India is critical in pursuing South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), which is the first step towards an eventual South Asian Economic Union, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), as well as India's increased engagements with the members of the ASEAN and countries belonging to the East Asia Summit (EAS).
- ★ The region is endowed with a varied topography and agro-climatic conditions which offer vast potential for agriculture, horticulture and forestry.
- ★ Several tourism attractions such as majuli island, blue mountain, palak lake etc
- ★ Numerous tea estates
- ★ Rich Bamboo reserves
- ★ Abundance of natural resources like limestone and enormous power potential
- ★ Handloom and weaving a skill acquired by local community

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Some initiatives taken by Government for the development of North Eastern Region during recent years:

1. **NITI Forum for North East:** Focussed attention for development of NER: The Forum proposed that the development projects in the NER would be based on the concept of "HIRA" (Highways, Inland Waterways, Railways and Airways).
2. **National Bamboo Mission:** The Mission will focus on development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, particularly in the North Eastern region. Its objective is to increase the area under bamboo plantation in non forest Government and private lands to supplement farm income and contribute towards resilience to climate change as well as availability of quality raw material requirements of industries.
3. **Digital North East Vision 2022:** The Vision Document identifies eight digital thrust areas – Digital Infrastructure, Digital services, Digital empowerment, Promotion of Electronics Manufacturing, Promotion of IT and ITes including BPOs, Digital Payments, Innovation & Startups and Cyber security in north eastern states.
4. **New train 'Arunachal Express'** flagged off to increase interconnectivity with the north east state.
5. **North Eastern Council (NEC)** – a statutory body with Governors and Chief Ministers of all the eight North Eastern States as its Member. The council discusses such inter-State issues as drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and ammunition, boundary disputes etc.
6. Government has recently unveiled the **North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)**. The scheme shall promote industrialization in the States of the North Eastern Region and will boost employment and income generation.
7. The Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways is implementing the **Special Accelerated Road Development programme for North East (SARDP-NE)** under Bharatmala Pariyojana.

However there are some challenges in development of north east region:

- ❖ Fragmented land holdings by small and marginal farmers which dominate the land holding pattern in the north east is uneconomical.
- ❖ The region has a low proportion of irrigated area and investment in building irrigation capacity has been insufficient and ineffective.
- ❖ The use of agricultural inputs in the north east is also low compared to the rest of the country
- ❖ Lack of proper connectivity: a large part of the region comprises hilly terrain and mountainous areas which makes the state dependent on road infrastructure which is not good in this area.
- ❖ Also the state has less number of airports which further augments poor connectivity.
- ❖ Scarcity of skilled and unskilled labour

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- ❖ Floods and landslide in monsoon makes places inaccessible. Over a million people in NER stand facing floods or landslides every year.
- ❖ Landlocked states
- ❖ A good number of people in Northeast India go blind every year due to lack of sufficient nutrients in their diet. Many people across the region are deprived of basic healthcare, clean water and sanitation, and affordable energy.
- ❖ The absence of adequate institutional and physical infrastructure, both national and international, coupled with the insurgency in part have slowed down NER's development process.

Notwithstanding its strategic location, the NER can be developed as a thriving and essential base for India's growing economic linkages, not only with Southeast Asia but also with Bangladesh, China, Japan and beyond. NER is the only part of India having the heft to counterbalance China's southwest and thus has gained serious attention from many countries across the world. For this laws like land acquisition need to be aligned with public private partnership and make the environment conducive. Trade can be drastically improved by implementing the government programmes in letter and spirit and improving the infrastructure and other accessibility.