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NAMO Drone Didi

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Why is in news? Why rural India needs women drone pilots

Women's empowerment is the key to building a strong and developed nation. This is especially the case when women flourish economically and contribute to rural prosperity.

NAMO Drone Didi — an initiative announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 30 during interaction with beneficiaries in Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. It is an excellent example of harnessing technological innovation to empower rural women.

About the scheme:

NAMO Drone Didi — an initiative aims to **supply drones to 15,000 women Self Help Groups (SHGs) to rent to farmers for agriculture purposes.**

This multifaceted scheme effectively **addresses the need to modernise our agricultural practices** and increase agricultural productivity by placing cutting-edge technology in the hands of rural women.

This makes them the epicentre of the rural economy, spearheading the new agricultural revolution.

The scheme also **opens up new opportunities for the country's young and dynamic start-ups** to enter the emerging field of drone aeronautics, which has huge untapped potential.

The scheme **approves holistic interventions** by converging the resources and efforts of Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW), Department of Rural development (DoRD) and Department of Fertilizers (DoF), Women SHGs and Lead Fertilizer Companies (LFCs).

It is envisaged that the approved initiatives under the scheme will **provide sustainable business and livelihood support to 15,000 SHGs** and they would be able to earn additional income of at least Rs. One lakh per annum.

Identification of SHGs:

The self-help groups would be identified from the total 89 lakh SHGs formed **under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana.**

The appropriate clusters where usage of drones is economically feasible will be identified following which the SHGs will be selected for providing drones.

The SHGs would be able to provide those drones as rental services to farmers for agricultural uses.

Financial assistance:

It will be **provided by the Centre to each SHG at 80 per cent of the cost of drone**, including accessories/ancillary charges but up to a maximum of ₹8 lakh.

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As one drone costs around ₹10 lakh, the government has allowed SHGs to take loan from banks under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) at lower interest rate since the Centre bears 3 per cent interest costs through subsidy.

Training of Human Resource:

The representatives of women SHGs, **qualified and elected by the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM)** and lead fertilizer companies (LFCs) will have to undertake a 15-day training that includes 5-day mandatory drone pilot training and 10 days on nutrient and pesticide application.

Role of Lead Fertilizer Companies (LFCs):

LFCs will act as a bridge between drone supplier companies and SHGs.

They will facilitate the procurement, repair, and maintenance of drones, addressing any difficulties SHGs may face in this regard.

Promotion of Nano Fertilizers:

LFCs will also promote the use of Nano Fertilizers, such as Nano Urea and Nano DAP, through drones. SHGs will provide drone services to farmers for the application of Nano fertilizers and pesticides.

The emergence of innovative **new liquid fertilisers** has generated the need for the **development of an efficient fertigation system**.

Though **India is the second-largest producer of fertilisers**, it is also the **second-largest importer** due to inadequate availability of natural resources — gas, phosphatic and potassic minerals, etc.

To overcome this dependence on imports, the government has facilitated the revival of several closed-down fertiliser units and encouraged the setting up of new units under the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme.

These steps have successfully protected Indian farmers from the price volatility of fertilisers in the international markets.

Through fertiliser subsidies, the government has been able to ensure that adequate quantities of fertiliser are made available to farmers at the right price at the right time.

The **Covid-19 pandemic and the recent global geopolitical situation** posed tough challenges to the sector.

Fertiliser prices soared the world over to unprecedented levels. We decided to convert these challenges into opportunities.

The government encouraged indigenous research for the development of alternate fertilisers, the outcome of which is the path-breaking liquid nano fertiliser.

The next challenge after this new invention was to develop an **efficient fertigation system**. That is where the emerging drone technology provided an answer.

Kisan Drones:

The **emergence of Kisan Drones** has opened up immense possibilities towards revolutionising agricultural practices.

The conventional system of spraying pesticides and liquid fertilisers through hand-held back-strapped pumps is not only time-consuming and cumbersome but is also fraught with dangers from the poisonous reptiles and lurking wild

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animals in the fields.

The automation of the spraying system by means of agri-drones provides a time-saving and efficient application system. Drone manufacturing activity has created tremendous employment opportunities for the youth.

Going further, this new field will also create opportunities for rural women pilots, mechanics, and spare-part dealers.

Expected Outcomes:

The scheme aims to provide sustainable business and livelihood support to 15,000 SHGs, enabling them to earn an additional income of at least Rs. 1 lakh per annum.

By infusing advanced technology like drones, the scheme seeks to improve efficiency, enhance crop yield, and reduce the cost of agricultural operations for the benefit of farmers.

Other Government Programmes for Rural Women:

The government has initiated the following empowerment programmes for inclusive development for rural women.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): This flagship scheme was launched initially to address the declining Child Sex Ratio but has since broadened its outlook to take under its ambit provisions to motivate higher education for girls and related issues of disempowerment of women on a life-cycle continuum.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY): PMMVY beneficiaries would receive a cash incentive of Rs. 6000 during pregnancy and after institutional delivery.

The **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** aims to make cooking gas (LPG) available to women from families that are financially backward.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM): It focuses on rural women and aims to achieve universal social mobilization by involving rural women. At least one woman member from each identified poor rural household is to be brought under the Self Help Group (SHG) network in a time-bound manner. NRLM would help them graduate out of poverty.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) aims to skill rural youth who are poor and provide them with jobs having regular monthly wages or above the minimum wages. It ensures social inclusion of the candidates by mandatory coverage of socially disadvantaged groups, where one-third of the persons covered should be women.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) aims to improve the present status of women in agriculture and enhance the opportunities for empowerment.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK): Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, extends micro-credit to women in the informal sector through a client-friendly, collateral-free and hassle-free manner for income generation activities.

Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK): It is as a sub-scheme under the Umbrella Scheme 'Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women' to empower rural women through community participation. MSK Scheme is envisaged to provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitled benefits and for empowering them through training and capacity building. Community engagement through College Students Volunteers is envisioned in 115 most backward districts as part of the MSK Block level initiatives.

National Repository of Information for Women (NARI): Ministry of Women and Child Development has prepared a portal namely National Repository of Information for Women (NARI) that will provide citizens easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women. The portal summarises over 350 government schemes and other important information for the benefit of women.

Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) will prove to be an effective alternative against the local police for women. MPVs were launched in all States and UTs to serve as a public-policy interface and facilitate women in distress. The MPVs report incidences of domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment, and violence faced by women in public spaces.

Mahila e-Haat is an initiative to economically empower women through financial inclusion. It is a direct online digital marketing platform for women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs.

Empowering Elected Women Representative (EWRs): Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched an extensive training programme with an objective of empowering Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) and help them assume the leadership roles expected of them and guide their villages for a more prosperous future.

Major challenges faced by Rural Women:

Low level of education among rural women is one of the main causes of their dismal participation in developmental activities.

Triple burden on rural women: Home-making, agriculture and child upbringing are all responsibilities of women. This leaves no time for skilling.

There is **widespread disparity in wages** of men and women. Women are paid less for doing the same level of work for the same duration.

The **ownership of land and other economic sources** by rural women is very less in comparison to male counterparts. This reduces their bargaining power in the family and reduce their decision making power.

This induces people to **look at women as an inferior being to men**. It makes parents to focus less on women education and save more for their marriage. Moreover they are encouraged to work only in compelling times when the male members are unable to earn requisite money for the family.

Access to quality health services, essential medicines, and vaccines is also very less. Restrictive social norms and gender stereotypes also limit rural women's ability to access health services.

A lot of rural women suffer from isolation and a **lack of access to critical technologies** to improve their work and personal life.

Conclusion:

The NAMO Drone Didi scheme will be a gamechanger. It will usher in a new chapter of women's empowerment and effectively address multiple issues by providing an opportunity for rural women to be at the centre stage of economic activity and rural prosperity.

There is no doubt that the scheme supported by the newly created network of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samridhi Kendras, which provide agricultural services under one roof, will prove to be a harbinger of modern-day agricultural revolution and prosperity in a largely agrarian country like ours.