Paperless Budget

Why in news?

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The Union government is discontinuing the practice of providing printed copies of the annual Economic Survey and the Budget to the media and the public.

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What is the current move?

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- Usually every accredited journalist will be provided a copy.
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- Institutions and corporates could buy a copy of the Budget and Economic Survey at a subsidised price.
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- These practises are dropped.
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- This year onwards, only the 788 members of Parliament will receive copies of these documents.
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What is the need?

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- Parliament has been reducing the print run of all documents. It is an attempt to go green.
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- It is in line with a recommendation of a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, which asked the government to print fewer copies of the Economic Survey and the Budget.
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- Both the Economic Survey and the Budget are technical documents and experts can easily access them from the government website for analysis.
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- Consequently the government has been reducing the print run in past two years, up to 60%. This was achieved by limiting the allocation of Budget copies to just three per media house.
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- It is in line with other initiatives like **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME)**, carbon tax petroleum products and other targets set for renewable energy capacity creation.
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- It will bring down the barriers to the implementation on the right to information front.
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What are the disadvantages?

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- The total cost of printing the Budget documents is around 70 lakh. Therefore this move will not lead to huge savings.
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- Instead of stopping printing, the government could have linked the printing of Budget documents to sustainable agro-forestry i.e finding sustainable solutions like using dead trees only than resorting to superficial curbs on consumption.
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- The Economic Survey and the Union Budget are two of the most critical documents. Curbing the print version inhibits distribution of information that **help people to understand the government's functioning and efficiency.**
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- Though the subscribers have been increasing at a faster rate, still only a small minority of people has access to the Internet.
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- True goal of going green can only be achieved if the government shift to a paperless way of functioning instead of discontinuing the printing of Budget documents.
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