

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC
Swine Flu Outbreak

Recent Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) figures suggest that the current swine flu outbreak has resulted in 4,571 cases and 169 deaths across the country. Most of the cases are registered in Rajasthan state than any other state. The report says that most of the cases in Rajasthan are reported in the year 2015.

IDSP

- It was launched with World Bank assistance in November 2004 to detect and respond to disease outbreaks quickly.
- It aims to strengthen the disease surveillance in the country by establishing a decentralized State-based surveillance system.
- The system will help to detect the early warning signals for epidemic-prone diseases with the help of surveillance units at Centre, State, and District level.
- It is administered by the Ministry of Health and family welfare.

2019*	4,571 CASES
Rajasthan**	1,856
Gujarat	576
Delhi	479
Haryana	363
Telangana	245
UP	181
Punjab	164

*Until January 27 in all the states shown in graph, except Haryana (January 26)

** Rajasthan cases rose to 2,123 on Jan 31

ALL INDIA, CASES SINCE 2012

2012	5,044
2013	5,253
2014	937
2015	42,592
2016	1,786
2017	38,811
2018	14,992

Source: IDSP; Rajasthan's January 31 update via state government

Aero India 2019

The 12th edition of Aero India, Aero India 2019, will be held at Air Force Station at Yelahanka in Bengaluru from February 20 to 24. Aero India 2019 aims to provide a significant platform in bolstering business opportunities in the International aviation sector.

Aero India

- Aero India Exhibition/Show is organised every two years.
- Aero India has carved a niche for itself globally as a premier aerospace exhibition, with eleven successful editions organised since 1996. The show aims at giving a fillip to the rapidly growing economy, defence production and participation of private players.
- The Aero India 2019 has a tagline “The Runway to a Billion Opportunities” and has a logo inspired by the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). The Ministry of Defence has planned following events during the Aero India 2019:

Start-up Day: The Start-up day would witness a start-up showcase event on February 21 to tap into the highly motivated entrepreneurial talent pool of the country. The showcase event is aimed at providing the platform for interactions between the domestic and international start-up community, key policymakers in the Indian defence sector, and CEOs of leading Indian and global start-ups.

Womens' Day: Women's Day would be organised On February 23 to showcase achievements made by women in the aerospace sector on February 23. The Women's Day would witness felicitation of women achievers, unveiling of the brochure highlighting achievements of women, experience sharing by leading women in Aero-Space Sector and flying display by women pilots, paratroopers etc.

Drone Olympics: Drone Olympics provides an opportunity for all the UAV manufacturing enthusiasts to showcase the capabilities of the Drones they are manufacturing.

Technology Day/Students Day: Technology Day would be observed on February 22 to provide an opportunity for the students involved in the aerospace sector, both civil and defence to showcase their projects.

Photography contest: A Photography contest would be held on the theme ‘Flying Objects’

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY
‘Rag Rag Mein Ganga’ launched on Doordarshan

Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation launched travelogue program “Rag Rag Mein Ganga” on Doordarshan.

This series has been made by Doordarshan in collaboration with National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).

The show relays the message of the need of rejuvenating River Ganga while also informing about the efforts of the Government to clean Ganga – presented in a unique and interesting format.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- NMCG is a registered society under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- NMCG has a two tier management structure and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee (both are headed by Director General, NMCG).
- Executive Committee is authorized to accord approval for all projects up to Rs. 1000 crore.

- Similarly, the State Programme Management Groups (SPMGs) acts as implementing arm of State Ganga Committees. It attempts to bring all stakeholders on one platform to take a holistic approach towards the task of Ganga cleaning and rejuvenation.

GEOGRAPHY

Impact of Polar Vortex in US

A record-breaking cold wave has swept through the US Midwest, with 22 states hitting sub-zero temperatures. The extreme cold has been caused by a blast of Arctic air, which in turn is a result of what is known as a “polar vortex” event.

Polar Vortex

- It is described as a whirling cone of low pressure over the poles that is strongest in the winter months due to the increased temperature contrast between the polar regions and the mid-latitudes, such as the US and Europe.
- The counter-clockwise flow of air helps keep the colder air near the poles.
- It spins in the stratosphere, a layer of the atmosphere 10-48 km above the ground and above the troposphere, where most familiar weather patterns develop.
- Usually, when the vortex is strongest, cold air is less-likely to plunge deep into North America or Europe.
- In other words, it forms a wall that protects the mid-latitudes from cold Arctic air.

When does the polar vortex cause extreme cold?

- In winter, the polar vortex sometimes becomes less stable and expands.
- Many times during winter in the northern hemisphere, the vortex expands, sending cold air southward with the jet stream.
- This is called as the “breaking off” of a part of the vortex.
- Normally, when the vortex is strong and healthy, it helps keep a current of air known as the jet stream traveling around the globe in a pretty circular path.
- This current keeps the cold air up north and the warm air down south.
- But without that strong low-pressure system, the jet stream doesn’t have much to keep it in line. It becomes wavy and rambling.

Is all cold weather the result of a polar vortex event?

- Though the polar vortex is always hanging out up North, it takes pretty “unusual conditions” for it to “weaken” for it to migrate far south.
- Portions of Europe and Asia also experience cold surges connected to the polar vortex.
- By itself, the only danger to humans is the magnitude of how cold temperatures will get when the polar vortex expands, sending Arctic air southward into areas that are not typically that cold.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) announced

To provide an assured income support to the small and marginal farmers, the Government launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) during the Interim Budget 2019-20.

Objective: Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year. This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each. This programme will be funded by Government of India. Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this. The programme would be made effective from 1st December 2018 and the first installment for the period upto 31st March 2019 would be paid during this year itself. This programme will entail an annual expenditure of Rs.75,000 crore

PM-KISAN and Rythu Bandhu of Telangana

- PM-KISAN has a cap of two hectares to make a farmer eligible for the scheme. But the Rythu Bandhu of Telangana poses no restrictions on the extent of land one should own. However, there is a restriction on the acreage to 50 acres in the Rabi season for Rythu Bandhu payouts.
- The capping of acreage at five acres under PM-KISAN would be disadvantageous to farmers in the rain-fed areas, where the farmers, even if they have more land, would still require financial assistance.
- While the centre’s farm support is Rs. 6,000 in three equal installments, farmers get Rs 8,000 in two installments ahead of the Kharif and Rabi in Telangana and the government has already promised to increase it to Rs 10000 in the current year.
- In Odisha farmer will get Rs. 5000 per cropping season under KALIA Scheme.

- Since the intricacies of the PM-KISAN are yet to be declared, it is not clear whether the PM-KISAN would include tenant farmers in the scheme. Rythu Bandhu incorporates even the tenant farmers under the scheme.

KALIA and Krishak Bandhu

- The KALIA scheme of Odisha offers annual assistance of Rs 12,500 each to each to farmers and Krishak Bandhu scheme of West Bengal offers an aid of Rs 5000 to farmers.
- Of all, the KALIA scheme of Odisha looks more comprehensive since it covers the landless agricultural labourers too and also seeks to provide help to vulnerable agricultural households, besides promising interest-free crop loan.
- The schemes of Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal have also incorporated the component of insurance.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

China refuses to budge, says India must sign NPT to gain entry into NSG

P5 countries have recently concluded their meetings to discuss issues related to nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

China maintains Status-quo

- China has once again refused to dilute its stand on India's entry into the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- It asserted that New Delhi must sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty to gain entry as there is no precedent for the inclusion of non-NPT countries.
- China has been opposing India's entry into the 48-member NSG on the ground that India is not a signatory to the NPT.
- The other P5 members, including the US and Russia backed its case based on New Delhi's non-proliferation record.
- China along with P5 has decided to uphold the NPT mechanism.

Concerns for Pakistan

- China has sought to club India and Pakistan together, on the basis of both being non-signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- It has asked the NSG countries to adopt a "criteria-based approach" — which essentially means that either both can get into the group or none.
- But most of the NSG countries, including the US, France and UK, make a clear distinction between India and Pakistan's nuclear non-proliferation track record.

Importance of NSG for India:

- The NSG is the top club of countries which controls access to technology and guards against proliferation. Its membership is important for India to access cutting-edge high technology.
- Pakistan has violated all norms of nuclear non-proliferation and had links with the North Korean nuclear programme.

P5+1 Countries

- The P5+1 refers to the UN Security Council's five permanent members (the P5); namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany.
- It is a group of six world powers which, in 2006, joined together in diplomatic efforts with Iran with regard to its nuclear program.

INDIAN ECONOMY

PCA Framework restrictions lifted for Three Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lifted the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework operational curbs on Bank of India (BoI), Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) and Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC). These public sector banks are out of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework. This will aid in making marked improvements in the capital positions and asset quality. The PCA restrictions were lifted after these banks provided a written commitment that they would comply with the norms of minimum regulatory capital, net NPAs (Non-performing Assets) and leverage ratio on an ongoing basis. These Banks have also apprised RBI of the structural and systemic improvements they have put in place.

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework has been issued by the RBI to maintain the sound financial health of banks. The RBI will initiate certain structured and discretionary actions for the bank under the PCA when the Banks breach any of the three key regulatory trigger points:

- Capital to risk-weighted assets ratio

- Net non-performing assets
- Return on assets.

The PCA framework is aimed at nudging the banks to take corrective measures in a timely manner, in order to restore their financial health.

DEFENCE

Defence Ministry approves acquisition of Milan-2T Anti-Tank Missiles

The Defence Acquisition Council has approved the acquisition of the Rs 1,200 crore Milan-2T anti-tank missiles. While the requirement was of 70,000 different types of anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and 850 different launchers, the DAC has approved the purchase of 5,000 Milan 2T anti-tank guided missiles from France.

Milan-2T Anti-Tank Missile

- An anti-tank missile is aimed at destroying the vehicles that are heavily armoured. The features of the Milan-2T Anti-Tank Missile are:
- Milan is a portable medium-range, anti-tank missile produced by Euromissile, based in Fontenay-aux-Roses in France.
- The Milan munitions consist of the missile in a waterproof launch tube.
- While MILAN 2 has a single shaped charge warhead for use against very thick and composite armour, MILAN 2T is armed with a tandem charge for use against reactive armour.

The DAC has given approval for the procurement of Milan-2T AntiTank Missile to meet the urgent requirements since the indigenous anti-tank missile Nag being developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is still under development.

Submarines acquisition

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has recently approved indigenous construction of six 'Project 75 (I) submarines' for the Indian Navy at a cost of over Rs. 40,000 crores. It is the second project under the Ministry of Defence's ambitious Strategic Partnership (SP) model.

Project 75I-class submarines

- Submarine is a defence equipment capable of independent operation underwater.
- Project 75I-class submarine is an advanced version of the Project 75 Kalvari-class submarines for the Indian Navy. Under this project, the Indian Navy intends to acquire six diesel-electric submarines. These submarines will feature advanced Air-independent propulsion (AIP) systems to enable them to stay submerged for longer duration.
- These submarines will have a vertical launch system (VLS) to enable them to carry multiple Brahmos supersonic cruise missiles.

Defence Acquisition Council

- To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated Defence Acquisition Council (DAC).
- It is headed by the Defence Minister.
- The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans.
- It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.
- The objective of the Defence Acquisition Council is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

Strategic Partnership (SP) model

- The model aims at providing a significant fillip to the Government's 'Make in India' programme.
- It envisages indigenous manufacturing of major defence platforms by an Indian Strategic Partner in collaboration with foreign company.
- India is envisaged as a manufacturing hub for defence equipment through transfer of niche technologies and higher Indigenous Content.
- The model would enhance the self-sufficiency for meeting the future requirements of the Armed Forces.