

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**
**National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 awards**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to confer the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 Awards to the Winners.

- National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 was celebrated on 12th January, 2019, on the occasion of National Youth Day.
- National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 Theme: “Be The Voice of New India” and “Find solutions and contribute to policy”.
- Eligibility: Youth in the age bracket of 18-25 years are invited to participate in the District Youth Parliaments.
- Significance: The National Youth Parliament Festival will encourage the youth to engage with public issues, understand the common man’s point of view, form their opinion and express these in an articulate manner. Relevant and effective voices on the vision of New India would be captured and documented to make these available to policy makers and implementers to take it forward.
- National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 has been jointly organised by National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) under the aegis of Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.

**National Youth Day:**

- The National Youth Day (also called as YuvaDiwas) is observed on January 12 every year to commemorate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda.
- The main objective is to propagate the philosophy and the ideals of Swami Vivekananda.
- It became a mainstream celebration in India from 1985 onwards and observed on January 12 ever since.

**National Service Scheme (NSS):**

- The National Service Scheme is an Indian government-sponsored public service program conducted by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India. The scheme was launched in Gandhiji’s Centenary year in 1969.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan recommended introduction of national service in the academic institutions on a voluntary basis with a view to developing healthy contacts between the students and teachers on the one hand and establishing a constructive linkage between the campus and the community on the other hand.

**Legality of E-Pharmacies:**

Amid a slew of conflicting judicial decisions from different High Courts, the legality of e-pharmacies continues to be questioned by various trade associations such as the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD).

**E-pharmacies**

- E-pharmacies, which operate through websites or smartphone apps on the Internet, offer medicines for sale at a discount of at least 20% when compared to traditional pharmacists.
- The added convenience of home delivery of medicines to one’s doorstep is there.
- For scheduled drugs, patients can submit photographs of prescriptions while placing orders.
- The legal status of these e-pharmacies is not clear because the government is yet to notify into law draft rules that it published in 2018.

**Opposition to e-pharmacies**

- The fiercest opponents of e-pharmacies are trade associations of existing pharmacists and chemists.
- They argue that their livelihoods are threatened by venture capital-backed e-pharmacies and that jobs of thousands are on the line.
- These trade associations also spin imaginary tales of how e-pharmacies will open the door to drug abuse and also the sale of sub-standard or counterfeit drugs, thereby threatening public health.

**Need for e-pharmacies to curb cartelisation**

- The entry of e-pharmacies will have effect on lowering the price of medicine for Indian patients.
- Associations of pharmacists is one of rampant, unabashed cartelisation that has resulted in an artificial inflation of medicine prices.
- In a fully functional, competitive market, pharmacists would compete with each other for business.
- This competition could happen in the form of discounts or improving operational efficiency.
- This practice of two competitors colluding to fix the sale price and area of operation is called cartelisation and is illegal under India’s Competition Act.
- Over the last decade, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has had to deal with several complaints alleging that trade associations of pharmacists are providing platforms for cartelisation.

**Barriers in way of e-pharmacies**

- The practice of requiring pharmaceutical companies to apply for a no-objection-certificate (NOC) from the regional trade association before they appoint new stockists in a region to sell a particular drug prohibits competition.

- By creating such artificial, extra-legal barriers to the free trade of medicines within India, these trade associations create huge distortions in the Indian market.
- In its recent policy note on “Making markets work for affordable healthcare”, published in October 2018, the CCI noted, “One major factor that contributes to high drug prices in India is the unreasonably high trade margins.”
- One of the culprits for this phenomenon identified by the CCI was “self-regulation by trade associations [which] also contributes towards high margins as these trade associations control the entire drug distribution system in a manner that mutes competition”.

Solutions Proposed by CCI: As stated by the CCI in its policy note, “Electronic trading of medicines via online platforms, with appropriate regulatory safeguards, can bring in transparency and spur price competition among platforms and among retailers, as has been witnessed in other product segments.”

### **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**

#### **The dispute between Britain and Mauritius over Chagos islands**

The UK should end its control of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean “as rapidly as possible”, the UN’s highest court has said. The International Court of Justice said the islands were not lawfully separated from the former colony of Mauritius. The UK Foreign Office said: “This is an advisory opinion, not a judgment.”

The issue:

- Britain detached the Chagos Islands from Mauritius in 1965, three years before Mauritian independence. From 1967 to 1973, some 1,500 Chagos islanders were gradually forced to leave their homes so that the largest island, Diego Garcia, could be leased to the US for a strategic airbase. Today, Diego Garcia hosts a major US military base.
- In 2016, after several judicial challenges, Britain extended Diego Garcia’s lease until 2036 and declared that the expelled islanders would not be allowed to go back. In 2017, Mauritius successfully petitioned the United Nations to seek an ICJ advisory opinion on the legality of the separation.
- Mauritius claims it was forced to give up the islands – now a British overseas territory – in 1965 in exchange for independence, which it gained in 1968.

#### **Arguments by Mauritius:**

- Mauritius argues it was illegal for Britain to break up its territory. It claims sovereignty over the archipelago and demands the right to resettle former residents.
- The crux of the Mauritian claim is the right of self-determination. In its submission to the court, the Mauritian government claimed that the separation of the islands from Mauritius was in clear breach of UN resolution 1514, also known as the Colonial Declaration. Passed in 1960, it enshrined the right of self-determination for colonial peoples and specifically banned the breakup of colonies prior to independence. This was intended to keep borders stable, and to prevent colonial powers from simply absorbing colonial territory into their overseas territory so as to retain their sovereignty.
- Yet in spite of this resolution, a number of states (including France and the UK) kept possession of parts of their former colonies following the decolonisation process.

#### **Implications of this judgment:**

- While ICJ advisory opinions are not binding, the ramifications of the opinion will be highly significant; an opinion in favour of Mauritius may strengthen their position in any future negotiations, as well as putting significant international pressure on the UK over the status of the territory.
- But what could be particularly critical is the decision’s impact on far broader issues of post-colonial sovereignty, and the legitimacy of colonial era independence arrangements.

#### **Global Digital Health Partnership**

India is hosting 4th Summit of Global Digital Health Partnership.

#### **GDHP:**

- Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) is an international collaboration of governments, government agencies and multinational organisations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of their citizens through the best use of evidence-based digital technologies.
- Established in February 2018, the GDHP provides an opportunity for transformational engagement between its participants, who are striving to learn and share best practice and policy that can support their digital health systems.
- It has been created to provide an international platform to facilitate global collaboration and cooperation to share policy insights, best practices and evidence based implementation of safe, secure digital technologies to improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of health systems.
- GDHP Member Countries: Currently, 23 countries are the member of this group which include Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Hong Kong SAR, India, Japan Republic of Indonesia, Italy, New Zealand, Netherlands Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea,

Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States, Ukraine, Uruguay and the World Health Organization.

- Five work streams of GDHP: Cyber Security, Evidence and Evaluation, Policy Environments, Interoperability, Clinical and Consumer Engagement.

#### Importance of GDHP:

- As countries around the world face the challenges of designing systems and delivering services that result in good health and well-being for their citizens, digital technologies can provide potential solutions. They can improve the safety, quality and effectiveness of healthcare, support earlier diagnosis of disease and the development of new medicines and treatments. They can empower patients, citizens and the care professionals who serve them.
- Governments are making significant investments to harness the power of technology and foster innovation and public-private partnerships that support high quality, sustainable health and care for all. The GDHP facilitates global collaboration and co-operation in the implementation of digital health services. There is currently no similar international forum to share best practice and enable co-working in digital health.

### INDIAN ECONOMY

#### Prepaid payment instruments

In a much needed respite to e-wallet companies, the Reserve Bank of India has extended deadline for completion of Know Your Customer (KYC) norms for prepaid payment instrument (PPI) issuers by six months.

Background: As per RBI directions, PPI issuers were required to complete the KYC process by February 28, 2019. PPIs or mobile wallets were mandated by the banking regulator in October 2017 to capture all information required under the know-your-customer (KYC) guidelines by end February.

#### PPIs

- Prepaid payment instruments are those which facilitate purchase of goods and services against the value stored on such instruments. Value stored on them is paid by the holder using a medium (cash, debit card, credit card etc).
- These are generally issued in the form of smart cards, mobile wallets, paper vouchers, internet accounts/wallets.
- Prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) come with a pre-loaded value and in some cases a pre-defined purpose of payment. They facilitate the purchase of goods and services as well as inter-personal remittance transactions such as sending money to a friend or a family member.
- These payment instruments are licensed and regulated by the Reserve Bank of India. There are three types of PPIs—closed system PPIs, semi-closed system PPIs and open system PPIs.
- The most common example of a closed system PPI is a brand-specific gift card. Such cards, physical or otherwise, can be used only at specific locations, and cannot be used to transfer funds from one account to another.

#### ‘IPrism’

The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, in collaboration with ASSOCHAM and ERICSSON India, has launched the second edition of ‘IPrism’, an Intellectual Property (IP) competition for students of schools, polytechnic institutes, colleges and universities. Aiming to foster a culture of innovation and creativity in the younger generation, the competition will provide young creators an opportunity to see their creations recognized on a national platform.

#### CIPAM:

- Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been created as a professional body under the aegis of DIPP to take forward the implementation of the National IPR Policy that was approved by the Government in May 2016, with the slogan – “Creative India; Innovative India”.
- Functions: CIPAM is working towards creating public awareness about IPRs in the country, promoting the filing of IPRs through facilitation, providing inventors with a platform to commercialize their IP assets and coordinating the implementation of the National IPR Policy in collaboration with Government Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders.

#### Good jobs, not Universal Basic Income, are needed for a good society

Neither is quotas in limited government jobs, nor raining down cash on farmers and informal workers in the garb of universal basic income are solutions for the Indian economy’s failure to create more good jobs at the bottom of the pyramid.

#### Need for Universal Basic Income

- The fear is that unless fundamental economic structures are changed, further advances of technologies into the realms of “Industry 4.0” will deprive even larger numbers of people of opportunities for work from which they can earn adequate and steady incomes.

- UBI and its many variants—quasi-UBI and income supplements for targeted groups—treat only the symptoms of the disease.
- The root cause of the disease is that many people do not have work that provides adequate incomes.
- The “gig” economy is creating many opportunities for earning incomes. However, the incomes are insecure and often insufficient. Moreover, the conditions in which people have to work to earn their incomes are not always satisfactory.

#### Good Jobs Instead Of UBI

- The solution is not to endow workers with a UBI—that way leads to dependency, unfulfillment, depression and marginalization.
- Employers to employ more numbers of less-skilled workers and pay them well. If they are provided good working conditions and opportunities to learn and grow, they will lead more satisfying lives.
- To increase the productivity of firms, too often governments subsidize labour-replacing, capital-intensive technologies, rather than pushing innovation in socially more beneficial directions to augment rather than replace less skilled workers.”
- India’s political leaders are challenged to provide more good jobs for the country’s huge number of young jobseekers.
- Panic solutions are quotas for everyone in the limited numbers of government jobs and raining down cash to farmers and workers in informal sectors in the garb of “universal basic income”.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**

#### Wide Field InfraRed Survey Telescope

WFIRST telescope will give humans the largest, deepest, clearest picture of the universe since the Hubble Space Telescope could find as many as 1,400 new planets outside Earth’s solar system. The new telescope paves the way for a more accurate, more focused search for extraterrestrial life, with about 100 of the not-yet-discovered planets having the same or lower mass as Earth.

#### About WFIRST:

- WFIRST, the Wide Field InfraRed Survey Telescope, is a NASA observatory designed to settle essential questions in the areas of dark energy, exoplanets, and infrared astrophysics.
- It will have two instruments, the Wide Field Instrument, and the Coronagraph Instrument.
- It will also have a field of view that is 100 times greater than the Hubble infrared instrument, capturing more of the sky with less observing time. As the primary instrument, the Wide Field Instrument will measure light from a billion galaxies over the course of the mission lifetime.
- It will use gravitational microlensing in its search for new planets. Gravitational microlensing is a technique that relies on the gravity of stars and planets to bend and magnify the light coming from stars that pass behind them from the telescope’s viewpoint.

#### Why WFIRST?

With the 2.4 meter telescope, single WFIRST images will uncover millions of galaxies. For example, where Hubble has found only a few galaxies within 500 million years of the Big Bang, WFIRST will find hundreds of these rare objects. In addition, the WFIRST coronagraph instrument will directly image ice and gas giant exoplanets.

### **DEFENCE**

#### Exercise Sampriti-2019

- It is an important bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh and this will be the eighth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- As part of the ongoing India Bangladesh defence cooperation, the joint military exercise will be conducted at Tangail, Bangladesh.
- The exercise is aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.
- The exercise will involve tactical level operations in a counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment under the UN mandate.
- In addition to understanding each other in tactical level operations, emphasis will also be laid for greater cultural understanding to strengthen military trust and cooperation between the two nations.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**If the plan isn’t working, change the plan not the goal.**