

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Jal Jeevan Mission (Jjm)**

Union Minister of Jal Shakti has emphasized the urgency to start work on Jal Jeevan Mission. He was speaking at the regional review of Jal Jeevan Mission in Southern States at Hyderabad.

About:

- The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) aims at providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) in rural areas by 2024.
- It was announced by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on 73rd Independence Day,
- Government of India and State Governments will work in partnership to further this goal.
- 14.60 crores rural households of the country will be provided with FHTCs.
- The provisional cost estimate for this mission is Rs 3.60 lakh Crores.
- Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation is the implementing Department for the mission.

Pm-Uday (Pm Unauthorized Colonies In Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana)

Members of the Unauthorised Colonies and Office bearers of the Resident Welfare Associations of Delhi felicitated the PM Modi on the recent historic decision of the Union Cabinet to confer ownership rights to 40 lakh residents of unauthorized colonies in Delhi.

PM-UDAY (PM Unauthorized Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana):

- Union Cabinet has approved the Conferring of Ownership/Transfer Rights to the Residents of Unauthorised Colonies on the 23rd of October 2019. A Regulation to this effect was notified on the 29th of October 2019.
- Union Cabinet has also approved the introduction of bill in the ensuing session of Parliament to recognise ownership of property based on General Power of Attorney (GPA), Will, Agreement to Sell, Payment and Possession Document etc.
- The Proposed bill will allow Registration Charge and Stamp Duty to be levied on nominal charge fixed by the Government instead of the prevailing circle rate as per the extant law.
- These reliefs are onetime measure for the residents of unauthorised colonies considering their special circumstances.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**H-1B, H-4 Visas**

A United States court ruled that a group of American-born tech workers have faced heightened job competition from work authorisations given to the spouses of H-1B visa holders.

H-1B visa:

- The lottery-based H-1B visas allow US companies to employ foreign workers temporarily in specialised occupations for three years, extendable to six years.
- The issuances are capped at 85,000 a year, but some employers such as universities and research nonprofits are exempt.
- The H-1B visa has long-served as a common passage for Indians into the US. Out of the 4,19,637 H-1B applications in 2018, 74% came from India. Most beneficiaries are aged 25-34, and are in fields involving computers.

H-4 visa:

- Spouses of H-1B workers are granted an H-4 visa, through which some have been allowed to apply to work in the US since a Barack Obama-era 2015 law.
- Since the law was instituted, a total of 1,20,514 H-4 visas have been granted, of which 1,10,649 have come from India.

International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

Union Agriculture Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar attended the Eighth Session of Governing Body of Seed Treaty at FAO Headquarters in Rome. The Governing Body sessions are biennial and this year it is being held from 11th to 16th November.

About:

- International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is also known as Seed Treaty.
- It is a comprehensive international agreement for ensuring food security through the conservation, exchange and sustainable use of the world's Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), as well as the fair and equitable benefit sharing arising from its use.
- It also recognizes farmers' rights, subject to national laws.

- The Treaty establishes the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing to facilitate plant germplasm exchanges and benefit sharing through Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA).
- The treaty was negotiated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and since 2006 has its own Governing Body under the aegis of the FAO.

The Zero-Carbon Act (New Zealand)

New Zealand's Parliament passed The Zero-Carbon Act. The Act is not a separate legislation but is an amendment to the existing Climate Change Responses Act, 2002.

About:

- According to the New Zealand government, this is the first legislation in the world to make a legally binding commitment to living within 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming.
- The Zero-Carbon Act will commit New Zealand to zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner, as part of the country's attempts to meet its Paris climate accord commitments.

The key aims of the Act include:

- reduce all greenhouse gases (except methane) to net zero by 2050,
- reduce emissions of biogenic methane (produced from biological sources) up to 24-47 percent below 2017 levels by 2050 and to 10 percent below 2017 levels by 2030,
- establish an independent Climate Change Commission and
- establish a system of emissions budget.

Biogenic Methane:

The Act proposes separate targets for biogenic methane because methane is a short-lived gas and degrades into the atmosphere over the decades even though it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Biogenic methane is emitted by livestock, waste treatment and wetlands.

International Seed Treaty

The eighth session of the Governing Body of International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is being held in Rome, Italy from 11th to 16th November 2019.

Key Points

- The Governing Body sessions are held biennially.
- India highlighted the need for conservation of plant genetic resources and the uniqueness of Indian legislation Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act to address the related issues.

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: It was adopted by the 31st session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on 3rd November 2001.

- **Objective:**
 - Farmers' Contribution: To recognize the contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops,
 - Access and Benefit Sharing: Establish a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials,
 - Sustainability: To conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- It is also known as Seed Treaty as it is a comprehensive international agreement for ensuring food security through the conservation, exchange and sustainable use of the world's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA).
- India is a signatory to the treaty.

Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001

- It aims to protect Farmers' and breeder's rights.
- According to the act, a farmer is entitled to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001 except the brand name.
- The Act is compliant to Article-9 of the Seed Treaty.
- Under the provisions of this Act, 138 farmers/farming communities have been awarded with the Plant Genome Saviour Awards by the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority.
- A few months back in April 2019, PepsiCo sued Gujarati farmers by invoking the provisions of the act.

INDIAN ECONOMY**CNG Port Terminal, Bhavnagar**

Gujarat Government has given its nod to the world's first CNG port terminal at Bhavnagar.

About:

- The proposed CNG port terminal will have annual capacity of 6 million metric tonne, which will increase the total handling capacity of the port to 9 million metric tonnes.
- The new facility will be developed in the Northern side of present port, under which RoRo terminal, liquid terminal and container terminal will be developed in future.
- The U.K. based Foresight group and Mumbai based Padmanabh Mafatlal group joint venture will invest Rs.1900 crore to set up a CNG port terminal at Bhavnagar port.
- MoU for this project between Gujarat government arm Gujarat Maritime Board and London based Foresight Group was signed during the 2019 Vibrant Gujarat summit.

Credit Ratings

Ratings agency Moody's has lowered India's outlook from stable to negative because of risks to economic growth. India's sovereign credit rating from Moody's is now Baa2, with the outlook cut from 'stable' to 'negative'.

Credit ratings:

- Credit ratings are assigned to debt instruments (not to equity instrument) by a Credit Rating agency (CRA).
- Rating is denoted by a simple alphanumeric symbol, for e.g. AA+, A-, etc.
- Rating indicates that whether the issuer company can repay its debt obligation in full and on time.

Credit rating serves 2 main purpose:

- Borrowing cost: It Influences the borrowing cost of country in international market.
- Investment: Credit rating Influences foreign investors decision to invest I.E. by seeing this, the investor decides whether to buy, hold, or sell a debt instrument.

Credit rating agencies (CRAs):

- A credit rating agency is an entity which assesses the ability and willingness of the issuer company for timely payment of interest and principal on a debt instrument.
- Credit rating agencies are regulated by SEBI under the SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999.
- Some of the Global CRAs are: Fitch, Moody, S&P.
- Some of the Indian CRAs are: Credit Analysis & Research Ltd. (CARE), Credit rating information services of India (CRISIL), Investment and credit rating agencies (ICRA) etc.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan**

The Ministry of Environment is undertaking a mass cleanliness-cum-awareness drive in 50 identified beaches under the "Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan", from 11th -17th November, 2019.

About:

- Objective is to make beaches clean and create awareness amongst about the importance of coastal ecosystems.
- The identified beaches are in 10 coastal States/Union Territories (UTs) namely Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha.
- Collected waste will be processed as per extant Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- The cleaning drives in all beaches are being undertaken, involving school/college students of Eco-clubs, district administration, institutions, volunteers, local communities and other stakeholders.
- Environment Education Division of the Ministry and Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) under the aegis of this Ministry will be responsible for the overall coordination for the drive in 50 beaches.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Anaemia Among Men**

A recent study published in The Lancet Global Health looked at anaemia among men in India.

Key Findings:

- Nearly a quarter of men in the age group 15-54 had some form of anaemia.
- Cases among men ranged from moderate or severe (5.1%) to severe anaemia (0.5%).
- Among age groups, men in the group 20-34 years had the lowest probability of having anaemia, while actual prevalence was lowest in the age group 50-54, at 7.8%. The prevalence was higher for younger age groups.

- Among men with anaemia, 21.7% had moderate or severe anaemia; among women with anaemia, 53.2% had moderate or severe anaemia.
- Among the states, the highest prevalence of any anaemia was in Bihar, with 32.9% of the men reporting it. The lowest prevalence among men was in Manipur (9.19%).

Anaemia:

- Anaemia is a condition in which the number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiological needs.
- Anaemia in men can cause fatigue, lethargy, creates difficulty in concentrating, thereby reducing the quality of life and decreasing economic productivity.
- An estimated 1.9 billion people had anaemia in 2013, which is 27% of the world's population, and 93% of these cases occur in low- and middle-income countries.
- Factors such as consuming smokeless tobacco, being underweight, level of urbanisation and household wealth are associated with a higher probability of developing the disease.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha Assembly To Be Paperless Soon: Speaker

With the winter session of the Odisha Assembly all set to begin, Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro informed that the process to make the House paperless has already begun and MLAs can now send requisition for questions and answers through a mobile app. This is to be align with the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) project and will also have wi-fi facility in the Assembly soon.

E-Vidhan

- It is Mission Mode Project (MMP) comes under Digital India Programme.
- Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) is 'Nodal Ministry' for its implementation in all 31 States/UTs w/Legislatures.
- Funding for e-Vidhan is provided by MoPA & technical support by Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MietY).
- Funding of NeVA is thru Central Sponsored Scheme i. e. 60: 40; & 90: 10 for North East & hilly States & 100 % for UTs.
- It aims to bring all legislatures of country together, in one platform thereby creating massive data depository w/o having complexity of multiple applications.

Editorial : Odisha's Case For Special Assistance

If not special category state status, Odisha at least deserves special treatment from the Centre. Battered periodically by natural calamities like cyclones and floods the state has a strong case for being put in the special category in terms of financial assistance.

- The damage caused by a series of disastrous cyclones and floods has taken a huge toll on its economy. The worst, of course, was the super cyclone of 1999 which left nearly 10,000 people dead. Ever since there have been many others including the most recent one, Bulbul that followed hard on the heels of Fani which had left behind a trail of destruction on the coast from which people are yet to recover.
- Bulbul has dealt a crippling blow to agriculture in five coastal districts including Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara which were among the worst hit by the gale. Preliminary assessments show that of the total crop area affected by the storm two lakh hectares have suffered losses to the extent of 33 per cent and above.
- Not all central governments have been generous in their assistance towards Odisha in the wake of such disasters. Many a time in the past the state has fought bitterly with central governments on this issue. It also had a grouse against the NDA 1 on this account though things have improved in the government's second innings because of pure political reasons.
- NDA-2's assistance to Odisha in the wake of cyclone Fani was rather satisfactory and did not afford the state govt much scope to grumble or target the Centre. But this has not always been the case. More often than not calamity assistance to Odisha has been meagre forcing the state government to fend for itself.
- It is a tribute to the financial resilience of the state government that it has managed to save the economy from crashing and kept its welfare schemes going. But this cannot go on forever. It is about time the Centre realized the state's need for special assistance and came forward to help it without any political bias. For argument sake one may accept that the Centre finds Odisha's demand for special category state status unfeasible. There is also a bit of politics involved in it. But there is no denying the state's claim for special assistance and the Centre should be generous in granting this.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Tackling air pollution has rarely been a priority in policymaking. Analyse the statement in the light of ongoing health emergency declared in the National Capital Region.

Recently, the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority- EPCA declared a public health emergency in New Delhi as pollution levels entered the 'severe plus' category. Factors such as stubble burning, vehicular emissions, firecrackers, and dust from the construction sector have deteriorated the condition further.

Factors which indicate that air pollution has been a low priority:

- Lack of political attention: Air pollution as an issue is raised only when there is a severe public outcry that too on limited occasions. Public health has never been a priority area or an election agenda.
- Toothless Watchdog: Under the Air Act 1981, the Pollution Control Boards are presently unable to fulfil their mandate as watchdogs against polluters.
- Pollution Liability: India's pollution liability regime has never prioritised the adverse impact of pollution on health. In its present form, India's Air Act does not mention or prioritise the importance of reducing the health impact of rising pollution.
- Power to Levy Penalties: Presently, boards cannot levy penalties. They are not empowered to encash environmental compensations from polluters to make up for the cost of mitigating the damage that they have caused.
- The government has taken several initiatives to combat air pollution:

Government Initiatives to Combat Air Pollution

- Notification of National Ambient Air Quality Standards and sector-specific emission and effluent standards for industries;
- Setting up of monitoring network for assessment of ambient air quality;
- Introduction of cleaner gaseous fuels like CNG, LPG etc and ethanol blending;
- Launching of National Air Quality Index (AQI);
- Leapfrogging from BS-IV to BS-VI standards for vehicles by 1st April 2020;
- Installation of on-line continuous (24x7) monitoring devices by 17 highly polluting industrial sectors;
- Regulating the bursting of pollution-emitting crackers;
- Notification of graded response action plan for Delhi identifying source wise actions for various levels of air pollution, etc.

Way Forward

- Pollution control boards should be empowered to declare public health emergencies in case of toxic air quality, with the power to temporarily shut down all polluting activities.
- Paying compensation for gross violations by industry would be a strong reinforcement for polluters to adopt cleaner technologies and comply with standards.
- Accountability and deterrence are essential in making sure polluters comply with emission standards.
- Coordination among multiple authorities: The causes of air pollution are multifold and several agencies and ministries are involved, therefore appropriate legislative measures for multi-sectoral participation and collaborating the efforts of state and federal pollution control boards should be taken urgently.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. With reference to the 'International Seed Treaty', consider the following statements:
 1. It aims to conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
 2. India is not a signatory to the treaty.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. With reference to the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), consider the following statements:
 1. It aims at providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) in rural areas by 2024.
 2. Ministry of Rural Development is the implementing agency for the mission.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. With reference to the International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), consider the following statements:
 1. It is a comprehensive international agreement for ensuring food security through the conservation, exchange and sustainable use of the world's Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).
 2. The treaty was negotiated by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. With reference to the "Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan", consider the following statements:
 1. It is undertaken by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
 2. Its objective is to make beaches clean and create awareness amongst about the importance of coastal ecosystems.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. With reference to the Credit ratings, consider the following statements:
 1. It is assigned to debt instruments and equity instrument by a Credit Rating agency (CRA).
 2. Credit rating agencies are regulated by SEBI under the SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. With reference to the 'Visas issued by United States of America', consider the following statements:
 1. The lottery-based H-1B visas allow US companies to employ foreign workers temporarily in specialised occupations for three years, extendable to six years.
 2. Spouses of H-1B workers are granted an H-4 visa.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. With reference to a recent study published in The Lancet Global Health on anaemia among men in India, consider the following statements:
 1. Among age groups, men in the group 20-34 years had the lowest probability of having anaemia.
 2. Among the states, the highest prevalence of any anaemia was in Odisha, with 32.9% of the men reporting it.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. With reference to the PM -UDAY (PM Unauthorized Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana), consider the following statements:
 1. The Proposed bill will allow Registration Charge and Stamp Duty to be levied on nominal charge fixed by the Government instead of the prevailing circle rate as per the extant law.
 2. These reliefs are onetime measure for the residents of unauthorised colonies considering their special circumstances.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only** (b) **2 only**
 (c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Which of the following Country's Parliament has recently passed The Zero-Carbon Act?
 (a) **New Zealand** (b) Australia
 (c) United Kingdom (d) Spain
10. Gujarat Government has recently given its nod to the world's first CNG port terminal at:
 (a) Surat (b) Porbandar
 (c) **Bhavnagar** (d) Kandla