

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Health Systems For A New India: Building Blocks—Potential Pathways To Reforms**

NITI Aayog released the report on 'Health Systems for a New India: Building Blocks—Potential Pathways to Reforms'.

About:

- The report identifies four focus areas on future health systems: delivering on unfinished public health agenda, empowering citizens to become better buyers of health services, integration of health services to reduce out of pocket spend and digitisation of healthcare.
- In the report, the Aayog proposed “strategic purchasing” of services, “risk pooling” and digitisation of health records for transformation of the healthcare sector.
- Niti Aayog has recommended that health system financing structure should be changed in such a way that predominant undesirable out-of-pocket expenditure is reduced and spending is directed towards larger risk-pools with strong strategic purchasing capabilities.

Related Info :

- The public health expenditure in India (total of Centre and state governments) has remained constant over years at approximately 1.4% of the GDP. On the other hand, out-of-pocket payments remain common and high in India, with only around 20% of the population covered by health insurance.
- Though Ayushman Bharat aims to expand the coverage significantly, it will take time and funding to ramp it up.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Gundecha Brothers**

Dhrupad maestro and Padma Shri awardee Ramakant Gundecha, 56, passed away. He was the younger one of the Gundecha brothers.

About:

- The Gundecha Brothers are Indian classical singers of the dhrupad genre of the Dagar vani. They are also the founders of the Gurukul Dhrupad Sansthan in Bhopal.
- From 1985 to 2019 the duo consisted of brothers Umakant Gundecha and Ramakant Gundecha.
- Following the death of Ramakant Gundecha in 2019, his son Anant began to perform with Umakant in the Gundecha bandhu.
- They have been awarded Padma Shri by Government of India in 2012 and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2017.

Dhrupad:

- Dhrupad is the oldest surviving classical style of Hindustani vocal music.
- Its name is derived from dhruva-pada, simply meaning "refrain," and today denotes both a form of poetry and a style of music in which the poetry is sung.
- Dhrupad music traditionally has three major parts - alap, jor-jhala, and composition. A dhrupad is introduced by a slow tempo-ed, rather somber and controlled, recurrent set of syllables (non-words) known as an alap.

GEOGRAPHY**Jaykwadi Dam**

Recently, several instruments like seismometer, piezometer, slope meter stopped functioning properly at the Jaykwadi dam. The seismometer was installed at the Jaykwadi dam after the devastating earthquake in Latur district, Maharashtra in 1993.

About:

- Jaykwadi Dam is located on the Godavari river in Aurangabad district, Maharashtra.
- The dam aims to address the dual problems of flooding along the banks during monsoon months, and that of drought during the rest of the year, particularly in the Marathwada region.
- The seismometer is an instrument used to measure and record seismic waves. Seismic waves study helps geologists to map the interior of the Earth, and measure and locate earthquakes and other ground motions like volcanic eruptions, explosions, etc. precisely.
- A piezometer is an instrument used for measuring the pressure of a liquid or gas or things related to pressure (such as the compressibility of liquid). It measures the strain of a liquid or fuel. They are often placed in boreholes to monitor the pressure or depth of groundwater.
- A slope meter is used to measure the angles of slope, elevation or despair of an object.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**250th Session Of Rajya Sabha**

The Landmark 250th session of Rajya Sabha began. On this occasion, Chairman Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu released a publication, titled "Rajya Sabha: The Journey since 1952" providing glimpses of various aspects of functioning of the House.

Key highlights of the publication:

- First sitting of the House was held on 13.5.1952
- First Bill passed : The Indian Tariff (Second Amendment) Bill, 1952
- First Bill concerning social change: The Special Marriages Bill, 1952
- First Constitution Amendment Bill passed by Rajya Sabha: The Constitution (Second Amendment) Bill, 1953 for readjustment of representation in Lok Sabha by increasing the size of population per constituency.
- First on reorganization of States: The Andhra State Bill, 1953
- Members: Mahendra Prasad is serving the highest number of 7th term followed by Dr.Manmohan Singh serving 6th term.
- The representation of women in Rajya Sabha increased from 15 (6.94%) in 1952 increased to 31(12.76%) in 2014 and is now 26(10.83%) in 2019.
- The first and the only time when a Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha cast his vote was in 1991 when the Panel Chairman Shri M.A.Baby did so when the voting was tied on the Statutory Resolution moved by the opposition seeking disapproval of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance resulting in the victory of the opposition in the House.
- President Rule approved only by Rajya Sabha: It happened only twice in respect of extension of President Rule in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland in 1977 and in case of Haryana in 1991 when Lok Sabha was dissolved.
- Bill passed by Rajya Sabha but negative by Lok Sabha: The Constitution (Sixty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1990 seeking to amend Article 356 relating to extension of President's Rule in Punjab.

Mhadei River

Goa and Karnataka have had long disputes over water sharing issues of the Mhadei river.

About:

- Mahadaya or Mhadei, the west-flowing river, originates in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats), Belagavi district of Karnataka.
- It is essentially a rain-fed river also called Mandovi in Goa.
- It is joined by a number of streams to form the Mandovi which is one of two major rivers (the other one is Zuari river) that flows through Goa.
- The river travels 35 km in Karnataka; 82 km in Goa before joining the Arabian Sea.

Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project

- It is undertaken by the Government of Karnataka to improve drinking water supply to the three districts of Belagavi, Dharwad, and Gadag.
- It involves building across Kalasa and Banduri, two tributaries of the Mahadaya river to divert water to the Malaprabha river.
- Malaprabha river supplies the drinking water to Dharwad, Belgaum, and Gadag districts.
- Kalasa-Banduri project was planned in 1989; Goa raised an objection to it.
- The Mahadaya Water Disputes Tribunal was set up in 2010. Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are parties to the tribunal.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**SAANS Campaign**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a campaign in Gujarat named Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS). The aim is to reduce child mortality due to pneumonia, which contributes to around 15% of deaths of children under the age of five annually.

Key Features

- To mobilise people to protect children from pneumonia, and train health personnel and other stakeholders to provide prioritised treatment to control the disease.
- A child suffering from pneumonia will be treated with a pre-referral dose of antibiotic amoxicillin by Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers.

- Pulse Oximeter (device to monitor oxygen saturation) will be used at the Health and Wellness Centre for identification of low oxygen levels in the blood of child and if required, the child can be treated by the use of oxygen cylinders.
- A mass awareness campaign will be launched about the effective solutions for pneumonia prevention like breastfeeding, age-appropriate complementary feeding and immunization etc.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Who Insulin Prequalification Programme

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the first-ever insulin prequalification programme to expand access to life-saving treatment for diabetes.

About:

- The decision is part of a series of steps WHO will take to address the growing diabetes burden in all regions. WHO prequalification of insulin is expected to boost access by increasing the flow of quality-assured products on the international market.
- About 65 million people with type 2 diabetes need insulin, but only half of them are able to access it, largely due to high prices. All people with type 1 diabetes need insulin to survive.
- Insulin was discovered as a treatment for diabetes almost 100 years ago and has been on WHO's List of Essential Medicines since it was published in 1977.

WHO Prequalification of Medicines Programme:

- The WHO Prequalification of Medicines Programme contributes to increasing access to critical medical products in low- and middle-income countries.
- The programme does this by evaluating medical products developed by manufacturers to ensure their quality, in turn expanding the pool of available quality medicines.
- Evaluating and prequalifying health products then guides international procurement agencies, such as the Global Fund, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and UNICEF, and increasingly countries to make bulk purchases of medicines vaccines at lower prices.

ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Surveillance Laws In India

On October 30, many publications reported that phones of several dozen Indian journalists, lawyers and human rights activists had been compromised using an invasive Israeli-developed malware called Pegasus. The malware was disseminated through Messaging platform WhatsApp.

About:

- The Israeli cyber intelligence firm NSO claims that it only sells the software to governments. But the Indian government has denied purchasing it and has asked WhatsApp to explain the security breach.
- Under both laws namely – the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, which deals with interception of calls, and the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, which deals with interception of data – only the government, under certain circumstances, is permitted to conduct surveillance, and not private actors.
- Moreover, hacking is expressly prohibited under the IT Act. Section 43 and Section 66 of the IT Act cover the civil and criminal offences of data theft and hacking respectively.
- The IT (Procedures and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules framed in 2009 under the IT Act:
 - The rules state that only the competent authority can issue an order for the interception, monitoring or decryption of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource (mobile phones would count).
 - The competent authority is once again the Union Home Secretary or State Secretaries in charge of the Home Departments.
- The Supreme Court in a landmark decision in August, 2017 (Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) and Anr. vs Union Of India And Others) unanimously upheld right to privacy as a fundamental right under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.
- The Data Protection Committee under retired Justice B.N. Srikrishna submitted a draft data protection law in 2018 which Parliament is yet to enact.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Space Internet**

SpaceX, the world's leading private company in space technology, last week fired a spray of 60 satellites into orbit to eventually evolve into a constellation of nearly 12,000 satellites aimed at providing low-cost and reliable space-based Internet services to the world.

Starlink network:

- The Starlink network, as the project is called, is one of several ongoing efforts to start beaming data signals from space, and also the most ambitious.
- SpaceX announced the satellite Internet constellation in January 2015, and launched two test satellites in February 2018. Following last week's launch, the company has now deployed 122 satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The LEO extends up to 2,000 km above the Earth's surface.
- Starlink aims to start space-based Internet service in the northern United States and Canada in 2020, and expand to cover the whole world by 2021.

Other initiatives:

- Several other private companies too, have plans for space-based Internet services.
- These include Amazon, OneWeb and O3B (apparently named for the 'Other Three Billion'), each involving large constellations of satellites in lower and middle Earth orbits.
- But these projects are very small compared to Starlink.

Need of satellites to provide Internet services:

- Currently, about 4 billion people, more than half the world's population, do not have access to reliable Internet networks.
- And that is because the traditional ways to deliver the Internet — fibre-optic cables or wireless networks — cannot take it everywhere on Earth. In many remote areas, or places with difficult terrain, it is not feasible or viable to set up cables or mobile towers. Signals from satellites in space can overcome this obstacle easily.
- Also, services such as autonomous car driving are expected to be revolutionised, and the Internet of Things (IoT) can be integrated into virtually every household, whether urban or rural.

Concerns:

- Three issues have been flagged — increased space debris, increased risk of collisions, and the concern of astronomers that these constellations of space Internet satellites will make it difficult to observe other space objects, and to detect their signals.
- Astronomers and scientists have also complained about increased "light-pollution", a reference to light reflected from the man-made satellites that can interfere with — and be mistaken for — light coming from other heavenly bodies.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**Govardhan Mutt**

The Govardhan Mutt of Puri, one of the four key mutts established by Adi Shankara, the prominent Hindu saint, is all set to be kept out of the Odisha government's administrative purview.

About:

- The Govardhan mutt is the only such mutt currently controlled by a State Act.
- The three others — Sharada Mutt (at Sringeri in Karnataka), Dwarka Mutt (in Gujarat) and Jyotir Mutt (at Joshimath in Uttarakhand) — function autonomously. The management of these mutts has been vested with the respective Shankaracharyas.
- The Odisha Hindu Religious Endowment (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in the ongoing winter session of the Odisha State Assembly. The bill excludes the Govardhan Mutt from the purview of the Odisha Hindu Religious Endowment Act, 1951.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Failure gives us another chance to prove ourselves.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Indian railways has been the lifeline of India's growth story. Analyse the challenges, advantages and disadvantages of its privatisation.

Ans:

With a modest beginning in India from 1853, the Indian Railways has emerged today as the main vehicle for socio-economic development of the country.

- Till now, it is owned and operated by the Government of India through the Ministry of Railways. It not only functions as a mode of transport but also creates huge employment opportunities both in the formal as well as informal sector.
- Bibek Debroy committee had recommended that the rail industry needs to be liberalized by allowing the entry of private operators to provide services. After privatisation of the Tejas Express, the government is planning to privatize some other trains and stations as well.

Advantages of its privatization

- Improved Infrastructure: Privatisation will lead to better infrastructure which in turn would result in improved amenities for travelers.
- Normalization of prices due to the competition: The issue of price rise due to better quality services will be solved when private players are allowed to enter the sector since the move would foster competition.
- Improved security: Private participation can lead to better accountability and monitoring, which can keep a check on rising accidents in railways.
- Better technological innovation: Private participation can lead to the infusion of modern technology and capacity building of Indian railways.

Disadvantages of its privatization

- Limited coverage: An advantage of Indian Railways being government-owned is that it provides nation-wide connectivity irrespective of profit.
- Profit motives after privatization would lead to the elimination of railway routes that are less popular.
- Thus, it can have a negative impact on connectivity and further increase the rural-urban divide.
- Lesser inclusive: Hike in fares can render the railways out of reach for lower-income groups.
- Issue of accountability: The privatisation of Indian Railways is not easy, as it covers every part of India and runs for 24×7 hours.
- The whole railway system cannot be handled by a single private entity. Also, coordination will be very difficult if it is segregated area wise and given to private parties.
- Impact on the economy: Indian Railways is the backbone of India as it provides low fare transportation to agricultural and industrial trade.
- Therefore, privatisation of Indian railways shall definitely affect the Indian economy at large.

Conclusion

- It is important to modernize the railways, so measures must be taken to reimburse the social costs speedily so that the resources of the railways is better allocated and facilities are upgraded from time to time.
- Some of the recommendations of Bibek Debroy committee like transitioning to commercial accounting, shifting to an independent regulator, and privatizing non-core functions of railways (catering, real estate development, including housing, construction and maintenance of infrastructure, etc) can be implemented.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. The Starlink network, is one of several ongoing efforts to start beaming data signals from space. It is an initiative of which of the following organisations?
 - (a) ISRO
 - (b) NASA
 - (c) European Space Agency
 - (d) SpaceX**

2. With reference to the Rajya Sabha, consider the following statements:
 1. The first Bill passed by Rajya Sabha was The Special Marriages Bill, 1952.
 2. The first and the only time when a Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha cast his vote was in 1991.

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 'Health Systems for a New India: Building Blocks—Potential Pathways to Reforms', consider the following statements:
 1. It was released recently by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
 2. It proposed "strategic purchasing" of services, "risk pooling" and digitisation of health records for transformation of the healthcare sector.

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 WHO insulin prequalification programme, consider the following statements:
 1. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently launched the first-ever insulin prequalification programme to expand access to life-saving treatment for diabetes.
 2. The WHO Prequalification of Medicines Programme contributes to increasing access to critical medical products in low- and middle-income countries.

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. Which of the following are the mutts established by Adi Shankara, the prominent Hindu saint?
 1. Govardhan Mutt
 2. Sharada Mutt
 3. Jyotir Mutt

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3**

6. With reference to the surveillance laws in India, consider the following statements:
 1. Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 permitted the interception of data by the government and private actors, under certain circumstances.
 2. The Supreme Court in Justice K. S. Puttaswamy case unanimously upheld right to privacy as a fundamental right under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.

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 the Dhrupad, consider the following statements:
 1. Dhrupad is the oldest surviving classical style of Hindustani vocal music.
 2. The Gundecha Brothers are Indian classical singers of the dhrupad genre of the Dagar vani.

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