

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Charter of Patients' Rights**

The Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), a national platform working on health and healthcare services, urged the Ministry of Health to immediately implement the Charter of Patients' Rights and ensure the inclusion of the entire range of patients' rights without any dilution.

Background: In August 2018, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced its plans to implement this Charter, which was placed in the public domain for inviting comments up to 30th September, 2018. Although nearly 4 months have elapsed since this declaration of intent, there seems to have been no further progress on finalisation and adoption of the charter.

Need of Charter of Patients' Rights:

- Right to non-discrimination is an important right. Every patient has the right to receive treatment without any discrimination based on his or her illnesses or conditions, including HIV status or other health condition, religion, caste, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- The charter assumes significance as India does not have a dedicated regulator like other countries. Existing regulations in the interest of patients and governing healthcare delivery systems are still on the anvil.

The draft Charter of Patients' Rights:

- It has been prepared by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
- The draft charter includes 17 rights with description, inspired by international charters and guided by national level provisions, with the objective of consolidating these into a single document.
- The proposed Charter draws upon all the existing relevant provisions, thereby making them publicly known in a coherent manner.
- The charter also prescribes certain responsibilities that the patient must adhere to. These include:
 - Providing all required information to their doctor, without concealing relevant facts, so as to ensure a correct diagnosis and treatment.
 - Patients are also expected to follow all instructions regarding appointment time, co-operate with hospital staff and fellow patients, avoid creating disturbance to other patients, and maintain cleanliness in the hospital.
 - Patients should respect the dignity of the doctor and other hospital staff. Whatever the grievance may be, patient or caregivers should not resort to violence in any form.
- The patients should also take responsibility for their actions based on choices made regarding treatment options and in case they refuse treatment.

WELFARE SCHEMES, PROGRAMMES**Yuva Swabhiman Yojana by Govt of Madhya Pradesh**

The Madhya Pradesh government has announced the launch of a scheme to ensure temporary employment to the youths from the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the urban areas.

Yuva Swabhiman Yojana

- The Scheme would guarantee 100 days of employment every year to the EWS youths.
- During their employment, youths would be given skills training of their choice, so that they can take benefits of the available job opportunities.
- While those in rural areas get employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), the urban poor youth are left out.
- This scheme will effectively cover them.

Jiban Sampark Project of Odisha

Odisha has launched Jiban Sampark project for the welfare of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Key features:

- The Project is being undertaken in association with UNICEF.
- It aims to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha on various development and welfare initiatives of State Government, especially on women and child welfare.

- The focus areas of the Project are skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups.

About 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)':

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. In 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory(UT), in the country (2011 census).
- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

70th Republic Day

India celebrated her 70th Republic Day with the theme of 'Life of Gandhi' which was a tribute to the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary. The Chief guest for the ceremony was President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa.

Highlights of the 70th republic day:

- The 70th Republic Day parade had the highest number of women officers participating in the celebrations with Lt. Bhavana Kasturi leading a contingent of 144 male personnel. This was the first time in the history of Indian Army that a woman led the Army services corps.
- An all-women contingent of Assam Rifles, India's oldest paramilitary force, participated for the first time. The contingent was opened for women in 2012.
- The weapons which were showcased for the first time in a Republic day parade were M777 and K-9 Vajra ultra light howitzers along with the Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) missile of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- For the first time in the Republic Day parade, An-32 aircraft flew using a mix of traditional and biofuel.
- Four former Indian National Army (INA) soldiers participated for the first time in the parade. INA was an armed force formed by Indian nationalist Rash Behari Bose in 1942 in Southeast Asia during World War II.
- 'Sankhnaad', a martial tune created for the Indian armed forces, was played for the first time on the 70th Republic Day parade. Since Independence, the Indian defence forces have been playing 'martial tune' created by the Britishers. 'Sankhnaad' is based on Indian classical music.

Why January 26th?

- The Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950, a date specially chosen to coincide with the anniversary of 'Purna Swaraj Diwas'. January 26, 1930 was marked as 'Purna Swaraj Diwas', or the day the nation would attain complete freedom from its colonisers by the Congress.
- The members of the drafting committee felt that the birth of the constitution should be observed on a day that held some significance in their fight for independence. When India was ultimately granted freedom by the British in 1947, but on August 15 and not January 26, the date was instead assigned to celebrating India's Republic Day.
- This was the day the Indian Independence Act was consequently repealed and India was established as a democratic republic, no longer a dominion of the British Crown.

SC issues contempt notices to RBI

The Supreme Court has issued contempt notices to the RBI for failing to reveal under the Right to Information Act intelligence received on loan defaulters and details of action taken against banks in connection with fraud.

Contempt under the Indian law:

- In India, the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, divides contempt into civil contempt and criminal contempt.
- Civil contempt is a 'wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other processes of a Court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to the court'.

- ‘Criminal contempt’ is ‘the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which:
- Scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court.
- Prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding.
- Interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.’

Significance:

Judiciary ensures justice and equality to every individual and institutions, therefore, the makers of the constitution upheld the sanctity and prestige of the revered institution by placing provisions under articles 129 and 215 of the constitution, which enables the courts to hold individuals in contempt if they attempt to demean or belittle their authority.

2006 Amendment:

- The statute of 1971 has recently been amended by the Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Act, 2006 to include the defence of truth under Section 13 of the original legislation.
- Section 13 that already served to restrict the powers of the court in that they were not to hold anyone in contempt unless it would substantially interfere with the due process of justice, the amendment further states that the court must permit ‘justification by truth as a valid defence if it is satisfied that it is in public interest and the request for invoking the said defence is bona fide.’

INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND BILATERAL RELATIONS

India-South Africa relations

President Cyril Ramaphosa of the South Africa was the Chief Guest at the 70th Republic Day. This is the second time a South African Head of State is Chief Guest for Republic Day — the first occasion was in 1995 with late Nelson Mandela.

Historical Significance

In March 1997, during the visit of President Mandela to India, the two countries signed the historic Red Fort Declaration for Strategic Partnership between India and South Africa.

Red Fort Declaration & Tshwane Declaration

- South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, it was the Red Fort Declaration on Strategic Partnership between India and South Africa, signed in March 1997 by which set the parameters for a rekindled relationship.
- The 20th anniversary of signing of the declaration was commemorated by an India-South African cultural extravaganza at High Commission of India, Pretoria on April 9, 2017.
- This Strategic Partnership between the two countries was again re-affirmed in the Tshwane Declaration (October 2006).
- Both these declarations have been instrumental mechanisms that has contributed in the past to both South Africa and India for achieving their respective national objectives.

Bandar Abbas to host IONS next month

Navy commanders of the Indian Ocean littoral states will convene in Bandar Abbas (IRAN) next month for participating in Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

IONS:

- IONS, the 21st century’s first significant international maritime security initiative launched in February 2008, provides a forum for discussion of regional maritime issues and promotes friendly relationships among member nations.
- It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues and, in the process, endeavors to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead.
- Under the charter of business adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.

- The 35 member nations of the IONS are grouped into four sub-regions- South Asian, West Asian, East African and South East Asian and Australian.
- There are nine states with observer status.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**Sarus crane:**

Sarus crane, whose numbers pushed to the edge by habitat degradation and human callousness, now seems to be getting a new lease of life in Uttar Pradesh, where it enjoys the status of official State bird.

Rise in numbers: The population of the Sarus crane, a bird distinguishable by its red upper neck and white collar, has climbed to 15,938 as per the 2018 census (summer). This is a jump of 5.2% from 2017, when there were 15,138 Sarus cranes across U.P. Its population in Uttar Pradesh has steadily grown since 2013, as wetlands thrive and farmers, fisherfolk nurture their nests.

Key facts:

- The Sarus (*Grus antigone*) is the tallest flying bird in the world.
- It is also India's only resident breeding crane.
- IUCN status- 'vulnerable'.
- It has three disjunct populations in the Indian sub-continent, south-east Asia and northern Australia.

Jumbos to patrol Odisha's Satkosia Tiger Reserve

Patrolling in the Satkosia Tiger Reserve is set to be strengthened as two trained elephants would be deployed there shortly. The two elephants are being brought from the Similipal Tiger Reserve.

Satkosia Tiger Reserve

- It is a tiger reserve located in the Angul district of Odisha.
- It is located where the Mahanadi River passes through a 22 km long gorge in the Eastern Ghats mountains.
- The tiger reserve is located in the Eastern Highlands moist deciduous forests ecoregion.
- Saktosia Tiger Reserve was designated in 2007 and comprises the Satkosia Gorge Wildlife Sanctuary and the adjacent Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Niti Aayog 2.0**

In a paper titled 'Towards India's New Fiscal Federalism', former Finance Commission chairman Vijay Kelkar has pitched for setting up of a 'new Niti Aayog' and giving it responsibility for allocating capital and revenue grants to the states.

Need for setting up of 'Niti Aayog 2.0':

Replacing the Planning Commission, which was promoting regionally balanced growth in India, by the NITI Aayog, a think tank, has reduced the government's policy reach. Therefore, the need has arisen for an institution to do the job at hand related to the structural issues including removal of regional imbalances in the economy.

Few suggestions related to composition and functions of the revamped NITI Aayog:

- It will be responsible for allocating development or transformational capital or revenue grants to the states.
- In order to make the new Niti Aayog more effective, it is essential to ensure that the institution is at the 'High Table' of decision making of the government. This means the vice-chairman of the new Niti Aayog will need to be a permanent invitee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).
- It need not be involved with the approval of the state's annual expenditure programmes. It should rather strive to be a think-tank with 'praxis' possessing considerable financial muscle and devote its energies to outline coherent medium and long term strategy and corresponding investment resources for transforming India.
- New Niti Aayog will annually need the resources of around 1.5 to 2% of the GDP to provide suitable grants to the states for mitigating the development imbalances.

Other arguments supporting the revamp of Niti Aayog:

- NITI Aayog cannot transform a deeply unequal society into a modern economy that ensures the welfare of all its citizens, irrespective of their social identity.
- It has no role in influencing public or private investment. It does not seem to have influence in policymaking with long-term consequences. For instance, demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax.
- NITI Aayog is supposed to be a think tank. This implies that while generating new ideas, it maintains a respectable intellectual distance from the government of the day. Instead, we see uncritical praise of the Govt-sponsored schemes / programmes.

Zearalenone in cereals:

Zearalenone is a fungal toxin infesting cereals such as wheat, maize and barley. It attacks crops while they are growing, but can also develop when cereals are stored without being dried fully.

While numerous studies document this toxin in cereals across the world, no data existed for India until now. This month, a Journal of Food Science study detected zearalenone in wheat, rice, corn and oats from markets in Uttar Pradesh. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India does not impose maximum limits for zearalenone, though the European Union (EU) does.

Concerns:

- Fungal toxins are commonly found in food, and can be a public health concern. India regulates the levels of some of these, including aflatoxin, deoxynivalenol, ergot and patulin. The first three infest cereals, while patulin is found in apples. Each of these toxins has been associated with disease outbreaks.
- For example, in 1974, a hepatitis outbreak in Rajasthan and Gujarat, which made 398 people sick and killed 106, was linked to aflatoxin in maize. Meanwhile, chronic aflatoxin consumption has been shown to cause liver cancer.
- Given this, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies aflatoxin as a Group 1 carcinogen, meaning there is enough evidence for its carcinogenicity.
- In zearalenone's case, there is no strong evidence of toxicity in humans so far, though several research groups are investigating. As a result, the IARC classifies it as a Group 3 carcinogen, which means evidence is not sufficient for an evaluation yet.

How Zearalenone affects?

Zearalenone behaves like oestrogen, the female sex hormone, and could cause endocrine disturbances in humans. Its nasty effects in animals, such as pigs, are documented. When fed with mouldy corn, pigs develop inflamed vaginas, infertility and other symptoms. This is why countries like Brazil regulate zearalenone levels in animal feed. In humans, the data are fuzzier.

More data are needed from cereals in other States, and from other storage conditions, before India decides to set limits. Since zearalenone favours cool climates, such contamination could be limited to a few States. Also, strong epidemiological data linking human zearalenone levels with diseases such as breast cancer are important. The latest findings are an excellent starting point, since nothing was known about the chemical in India so far. It is time to build upon it.

Delhi to award MSP as per Swaminathan Committee Report

The Delhi government has decided to introduce the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for farmers based on the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) headed by MS Swaminathan.

Swaminathan Committee recommendations on MSP

The National Commission on Farmers (NCF) was constituted on November 18, 2004 under the chairmanship of Professor M.S. Swaminathan. The committee made some key recommendations on land reforms, irrigation, credit and insurance, food security, employment, the productivity of agriculture and farmer competitiveness.

On the issue of MSP, the committee recommended providing farmers with a minimum support price at 50 per cent profit above the cost of production classified as C2 by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

Production costs in Agriculture

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) proposes three definitions of production costs in agriculture. They are:

- A2: It is the actual paid-out expenses incurred by farmers — in cash and kind on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired labour, fuel, irrigation and other inputs from outside.
- A2+FL: It includes A2 cost plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.
- C2: It accounts for the rentals or interest loans, owned land and fixed capital assets over and above A2+FL.
- The Swaminathan Committee recommended the MSP to be basic cost and prescribed MSP 50 per cent above C2.

MISCELLANEOUS

Indian Railways' fastest Train 18 renamed:

- India's first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train, Train 18, has been named Vande Bharat Express.
- The train is set to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph.
- Train 18 is a flagship train set; the first prototype has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, in a record time of 20 months.
- The train is a 100% 'Make in India' project and is claimed to be built at half the cost of a similar train set that is imported.
- T-18 is a self-propelled engine-less train (similar to the Metro trains) and is energy-efficient as its coaches will be fitted with LED lights. Coaches will have automatic doors and retractable footsteps.
- It will be inter-connected with fully sealed gangways along with a GPS-based Passenger Information System. It is provided with of Bio toilets.

Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh, and Bhupen Hazarika awarded Bharat Ratna

President of India conferred the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian honor, to former President Pranab Mukherjee, along with social activist Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous), and Assamese musician Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous).

Bharat Ratna

- Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India.
- The provision of Bharat Ratna was introduced in 1954.
- There is no written provision that Bharat Ratna should be awarded to Indian citizens only.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavor.
- The award was originally limited to achievements in the arts, literature, science and public services but the government expanded the criteria to include "any field of human endeavor" in December 2011.

Article 18 of the constitution:

- Article 18 (1) of the Constitution said that 'the award cannot be used as a prefix or suffix to the recipient's name.
- However, should an award winner consider it necessary, he/she may use the expression in their biodata/letterhead/visiting card etc. to indicate that he/she is a recipient of the award.