

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC)**

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) formally announced the re-designation of National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC), as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Priority Medical Devices and Health Technology Policy.

About:

- Parent programme: National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC) has been set up under the National Health Mission (NHM) of Government of India to serve as an apex body for technical assistance.
- Established in: 2006.
- Mandate: To assist in policy and strategy development in the provision and mobilization of technical assistance to the states and in capacity building for the Ministry of Health at the centre and in the states.
- Administration: It has a 23 member Governing Body, chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Health, Government of India.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)**

Union Minister for Health along with several State Health Ministers launched Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) initiative for Zero Preventable Maternal and Newborn Deaths.

About:

- The initiative aims at assuring dignified, respectful and quality health care at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services for every woman and newborn visiting the public health facility in order to end all preventable maternal and newborn deaths.
Under it, pregnant women, mothers up to 6 months after delivery, and all sick newborns will be able to avail free healthcare benefits. The government will also provide free transport from home to health institutions.
- The pregnant women will have a zero expense delivery and C-section facility in case of complications at public health facilities.
- According to government, India's maternal mortality rate has declined from 254 per 1,00,000 live births in 2004-06 to 130 in 2014-16. Between 2001 and 2016, the infant mortality rate came down from 66 per 1,000 live births to 34.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Special And Differential Treatment**

India along with several other countries, including China and African nations, has cautioned against diluting special and differential (S&D) treatment provisions related to developing countries under WTO rules, saying it would lead to "intractable deadlock" at the WTO.

About:

- The WTO agreements contain special provisions which give developing countries special rights and allow other members to treat them more favourably. These are "special and differential treatment provisions" (abbreviated as S&D or SDT).
- The special provisions include:
 - longer time periods for implementing agreements and commitments
 - measures to increase trading opportunities for these countries
 - provisions requiring all WTO members to safeguard the trade interests of developing countries
 - support to help developing countries build the infrastructure to undertake WTO work, handle disputes, and implement technical standard
 - provisions related to least-developed country (LDC) members
- Designation: Currently, any WTO member can designate itself as a developing country and avail these benefits. The US had submitted its suggestions to the WTO which states that self-declaration puts the WTO on a path to failed negotiations and it is also a path to institutional irrelevance.

- In the Doha Declaration, ministers agreed that all special and differential treatment provisions should be reviewed, in order to strengthen them and make them more precise, effective and operational.

INDIAN ECONOMY

GST Committee of Central And State Tax Officers

The GST Council has set up a committee of Central and State tax officers to look into a “wide range of reforms” to boost Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collection.

About:

- Background: This development took place ten days after the collection for the month of September was found to dip to Rs. 91,916 crore, the lowest after February 2018. The Government has set a target of collecting over Rs. 1 lakh crore every month during the current fiscal.
- Membership:
- Officers from the Centre will include Joint Secretary (Revenue), Principal Commissioner (GST PW), Joint Secretary (Tax Research Unit), Additional Director General (ARM) and Additional Director General (Systems).
- SGST (State Goods & Services Tax) Commissioner from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Punjab will represent the States. Any other State could also join the committee on a voluntary basis.
- Areas to be considered by the committee include: Changes in GST including checks and balances to prevent misuse, measures to improve voluntary compliance, measures for expansion of tax base and anti-evasion measures using better data analytics and better administrative coordination.
- Timeline: The panel has been asked to submit the report within 15 days.

Dearness Allowance (Da)

The Union Cabinet decided to increase the Dearness Allowance (or DA) that it pays its current employees and existing pensioners by 5 percentage points.

About:

- The Dearness Allowance (or DA) is provided by the government to its employees to cushion the impact of the rising cost of living. Inflation (or rate of increase in prices) eats away the buying power of money; hence the justification for DA.
- Methodology: To calculate DA, the government typically uses the All India Consumer Price Index-based inflation rate as a broad marker. For greater effectiveness, the DA is revised twice a year.

Recent decision:

- The Union Cabinet decided to increase the DA that it pays its current employees and existing pensioners by 5 percentage points. Accordingly, 50 lakh central government employees and 65 lakh pensioners will henceforth receive 17% of their basic salary as DA instead of 12%.

Impact on economy:

- An increase in DA provides additional money in the hands of government employees. If all this additional money is spent, it will have a positive impact on the consumption demand, which the biggest problem in the economy right now.
- However, this money will come out of the government's coffers, which will hit the resources available with the government, it will constrain economic activity.

House Building Advance (HBA)

The rate of interest on House Building Advance (HBA) has been reduced by the Centre from existing 8.5% to 7.9% for a period of one year, irrespective of the loan amount of HBA. This will be with effect from 01st October 2019. The move aims at boosting housing demand.

About:

- The scheme of HBA to Central Government Employees is aimed as a welfare measure providing assistance to the Government employees to construct/acquire house/flats of their own.
- HBA is admissible to permanent employees of the Central Government and all those temporary employees also who have rendered 5 years of continuous service.

- The scheme was first launched in 1956.
- The Ministry of Urban Development is the nodal Ministry for implementing the same. The Ministry also formulates the rules pertaining to House Building Advance.
- The Ministries/Departments are delegated powers to sanction HBA to their employees in accordance with the HBA rules.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40)**

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called off his visit to Copenhagen to attend the C40 World Mayors' Summit after he failed to receive the mandatory clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

About:

- C40 is a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change.
- The C40 group was started in 2005 by the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone.
- It has 96 members at present, representing over 70 crore people, and one-quarter of the global economy. The cities from India that are part of the C40 are Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, Jaipur, and Kolkata.

C40 World Mayors' Summit:

- The C40 World Mayors' Summit is a three-day conference where city leaders from around the world share ideas on green urban development.
- The summit is being held in Copenhagen (Denmark's capital) and attendees include mayors representing over 90 cities from around the world.
- Over the past decade, C40 has convened six Mayors Summits, hosted by London (2005), New York (2007), Seoul (2009), Sao Paulo (2011), Johannesburg (2014) and Mexico City (2016).

PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, AWARDS ETC.**Nobel Prize In Literature**

Austria's Peter Handke won the 2019 Nobel Prize for Literature, and the postponed 2018 award went to Polish author Olga Tokarczuk.

About:

- Austria's Peter Handke won the 2019 prize for "for an influential work that with linguistic ingenuity has explored the periphery and the specificity of human experience," the Academy said in a statement.
- Polish author Olga Tokarczuk won the 2018 prize – delayed by one year after a sexual assault scandal rocked the award-giving Academy – for "a narrative imagination that with encyclopaedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life."
- Olga Tokarczuk, the 15th woman to win the Nobel Literature Prize, also won the International Booker Prize in 2018.

Related Info :

- The Nobel Prize in Literature is a Swedish literature prize that is awarded annually, since 1901.
- it is awarded to an author from any country who has produced "in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction". Nobel's "vague" wording for the criteria for the prize has led to recurrent controversy.
- Though individual works are sometimes cited as being particularly noteworthy, the award is based on an author's body of work as a whole.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Your happiness lies within you.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICES

Qns- Discuss the need and ways for redefining the fiscal architecture of India to strengthen the fiscal federalism.

Answer-

Federalism is the basic structure of Indian Constitution (SR Bommai Case). India's asymmetrical model of federalism influences the Centre-State financial relations as well. Centre state financial relations are dynamic and continuously changing as can be observed by steps like devolving 42% of funds to states on the recommendation of 14th Finance Commission, replacing Planning Commission by NITI Aayog, and recently by the introduction of GST.

However, there are both horizontal and vertical imbalances in fiscal architecture in India:

- Horizontal imbalance arise because of differing levels of attainment by the states due to differential growth rates and their developmental status in terms of the state of social or infrastructure capital.
- Vertical imbalance arises due to the fiscal asymmetry in powers of taxation vested with the different levels of government in relation to their expenditure responsibilities prescribed by the constitution.
- For ex: central government having a far greater domain of taxation (e.g., income taxes personal or corporate, taxing consumption of goods and services (CGST), taxing foreign transactions, etc).
- Central Government collects around 60% of the total taxes, while its expenditure responsibility (for carrying out its constitutionally mandated responsibility such as defense, etc.) is only 40% of the total public expenditure.
- Such vertical imbalances are even sharper in the case of the third tier government consisting of elected local bodies and panchayats.

Suggested reforms

- India's Fiscal Federalism needs to be restructured around the four pillars namely Finance Commission, NITI Aayog, GST and decentralization in order to eliminate the inadequacies of vertical and horizontal imbalances.
- Finance Commission must be relieved from the dual task of dealing with provision of basic public goods and services and capital deficits. It should be confined to focussing on the removal of basic public goods imbalance (Type I).

NITI Aayog:

- NITI Aayog should receive significant resources (1% to 2% of the GDP) to remove regional and subregional disparities among states by reducing development imbalances in the areas of infrastructure deficit.
- NITI should have an Independent Evaluation Office to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the utilization of revenue and capital grants.

Decentralization can serve as the third pillar of the new fiscal federalism :

- Strengthening local finances by creating a consolidated fund for urban local body/ Panchayati Raj institutions.
- Centre and States should contribute an equal proportion of their Central GST (CGST) and State GST (SGST) collections and send the money to the consolidated fund of the third tier.
- State Finance Commissions should be accorded the same status as the Union Finance Commission and the 3Fs of democratic decentralization (funds, functions, and functionaries) should be implemented properly.
- Goods and Services Tax should be simplified in its structure.
- Single Rate GST: with suitable surcharges on "sin goods," zero ratings of exports and reforming the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) and the e-way bill.
- Transparency: The GST Council should undertake reforms in an informed and transparent manner, by creating its own secretariat and independent experts.

Conclusion

Thus, the idea of competitive cooperative federalism in the spirit of 'Team India' is the key to achieve good governance and to meet the local aspirations.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS

1. With reference to the Dearness Allowance for government employees, consider the following statements:
 1. It is provided by the government to its employees to cushion the impact of the rising cost of living.
 2. To calculate DA, the government typically uses the All India Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rate as a broad marker.

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 National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC), consider the following statements:
 1. It has been set up under the National Health Mission (NHM) of Government of India to serve as an apex body for technical assistance.
 2. Its mandate is to assist in policy and strategy development in the provision and mobilization of technical assistance to the states and in capacity building for the Ministry of Health at the centre and in the states.

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 House Building Advance (HBA), consider the following statements:
 1. It is admissible only to permanent employees of the Central Government.
 2. The Ministry of Urban Development is the nodal Ministry for implementing the scheme.

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. In the context of which of the following do you sometimes find the terms 'Doha Declaration and special and differential (S&D) treatment' in the news?

(a) **WTO affairs**
(b) SAARC affairs
(c) UNFCCC affairs
(d) World Bank affairs
5. With reference to the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), consider the following statements:
 1. It is a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change.
 2. All Tier-1 cities from India are part of the C40.

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. Who among the following have been awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize for Literature?

(a) **Peter Handke**
(b) Olga Tokarczuk
(c) Kazuo Ishiguro
(d) Bob Dylan
7. With reference to the Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN), consider the following statements:
 1. It is an initiative for Zero Preventable Maternal and Newborn Deaths.
 2. The pregnant women will have a zero expense delivery and C-section facility in case of complications at public health facilities.

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 Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, consider the following statements:
 1. Recently it has set up a committee of Central and State tax officers to look into a "wide range of reforms" to boost Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collection.
 2. The GST Council is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.

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