

GOVERNANCE**Parivar Pehchan Patra and Privacy Concerns**

Recently, there has been a privacy concern with respect to Haryana's Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP) Scheme.

Although enrollment under the scheme is voluntary, but the precondition of linking it to get the benefit of many essential services has raised serious concerns about the scheme.

Key Points

- **Contradictory Position:** Although the enrollment under the PPP is voluntary, but in case a citizen or a family wishes to apply for a service delivered by the Haryana government, the PPP ID would be required, which leaves very little choice before the residents.
- **Data Abuse:** In the absence of privacy laws in India, or any indication of data protection Standard Operating Procedures being followed for this exercise, there is strong possibility of potential abuse of the data collected under the PPP.
- Moreover, a lot of data which is being sought is well above and beyond what is required for the delivery of a particular service.

Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP) Scheme:

- **Background:** PPP scheme was formally launched in July 2019 to achieve Haryana government's vision for 'paperless' and 'faceless' delivery of schemes, services and benefits offered by the state government.
- Under this, each family is considered a single unit and gets an 8-digit unique identification number, called family ID.
- Family IDs are also linked to independent schemes like scholarships, subsidies and pensions, so as to ensure consistency and reliability.
- It also enables automatic selection of beneficiaries of various schemes, subsidies and pensions.
- **Objective:** The primary objective of Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP) is to create authentic, verified and reliable data of all families in Haryana.

Benefits of PPP:

- **Family as a Unit:** Union government's Aadhaar card contains individual's details and does not cater to the entire family as a unit.
- Although the ration card system is there, it is not updated and does not contain adequate family records.
- **Smooth Service Delivery:** Government services and schemes such as social security pensions, ration cards and birth, death, caste and income certificates etc. are being delivered by various departments of the Haryana government through PPP.
- **Beneficial for Migrant Workers:** Registration IDs are provided to those who live in Haryana but have not completed residency requirements.
- This enables the State government to provide benefits such as rations from fair price shops, benefits of labour schemes, street vendors' support schemes, etc.

Way Forward

- The PPP may also be linked to property records in the government database of lands and properties to prevent fraudulent transactions and clarify ownership.
- Besides, the government should start a mass campaign to make people aware about the schemes and its benefits.
- Government should also introduce measures to strengthen the security of data being collected under the Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP) scheme.

INDIAN ECONOMY**RBI Monetary Policy 2021**

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has forecasted that real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), hit by the Covid pandemic in 2020-21, is expected to grow by 10.5% in 2021-22.

RBI had previously introduced a number of measures in its Monetary Policy Report for dealing with the Covid-19 induced economic setback.

Key Points

GDP Forecast:

The 10.5% real GDP growth in 2021-22 forecasted by RBI will move in the range of 26.2 to 8.3% in the first half and 6% in the third quarter of 2021.

Hit by lockdown and closures of industries, GDP had contracted by 23.9% in the June quarter of 2020-21 and fell by 7.5% in the September quarter of 2020-21.

Real GDP is a measurement of economic output that accounts for the effects of inflation or deflation.

The difference between nominal GDP and real GDP is the adjustment for inflation. Since nominal GDP is calculated using current prices, it does not require any adjustments for inflation.

Reasons for a Positive Outlook:

Rural demand is likely to remain resilient on good prospects of agriculture.

Urban demand and demand for contact-intensive services is expected to strengthen with the substantial fall in Covid-19 cases and the spread of vaccination.

Consumer confidence is reviving, and business expectations of manufacturing, services and infrastructure remain upbeat.

The fiscal stimulus under AtmaNirbhar 2.0 and 3.0 schemes of the government will likely accelerate public investment.

The Union Budget 2021-22, with its thrust on sectors such as health and well-being, infrastructure, innovation and research, etc. should help accelerate the growth momentum.

Unchanged Policy Rates:

The RBI has kept the repo rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) unchanged at 4%.

The reverse repo rate under the LAF remains unchanged at 3.35% and the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 4.25%.

Other Decisions:**Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):**

The RBI has decided to restore the CRR in a non-disruptive manner from 3% to 4% in two stages by May 2021.

Direct Retail Investment in Government Securities (G-Sec):

The RBI has proposed to allow small investors direct access to the G-Sec platform.

A G-Sec is a tradable instrument issued by the Central Government or the State Governments and is considered to be the safest form of investment.

Accommodative Stance:

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI also decided to continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward.

These decisions are in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation of 4% within a band of +/- 2 %, while supporting growth.

The CPI calculates the difference in the price of commodities and services such as food, medical care, education, electronics etc, which Indian consumers buy for use.

The CPI has several sub-groups including food and beverages, fuel and light, housing and clothing, bedding and footwear.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY**The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave**

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave began with a keynote address from the Union Defence minister on 4th February on the sidelines of Aero India 2021 in Bengaluru.

Key Points

- As the largest nation in the IOR region with a vast coastline of 7500 Kms, India has an active role to play for peaceful and prosperous co-existence of all countries.
- SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region is the theme of Indian Ocean Policy as outlined by Indian Prime Minister in 2015.
- India's approach and vision to tackle global challenges was highlighted by Prime Minister's dynamic five 'S' vision – Samman (Respect), Samvaad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace) and Samridhi (Prosperity).

INFRASTRUCTURE**Ropeways And Alternate Mobility Solutions**

The Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways will, from now on, also look after the development of Ropeways and Alternate Mobility Solutions.

Key Points

- The Ministry will also look after the construction, research, and policy in this area.
- Formulation of institutional, financial, and regulatory framework for the technology will also fall under the ambit of this move.
- The move is expected to give a boost to the sector, by setting up a regulatory regime, and facilitating research and new technology to come into this sector.
- An amendment to the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 has been notified, to enable this step.

The important benefits of this step could be:

- Last mile connectivity for remote locations
- Reducing congestion on mainstream roads
- Chance to develop world-class ropeway infrastructure
- Setting up of an organised and dedicated rope-way and alternative mobility solutions industry
- New technology, like CPT – Cable Propelled Transit coming to the sector
- Setting safety norms for unregulated ropeways

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**Startup India Seed Fund Scheme**

Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) has been approved for the period of next four years starting from 2021-22.

Key Points

It will be implemented with an effect from 1st April 2021.

Aim: To provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization.

- Rs. 945 Crore corpus will be divided over the next 4 years for providing seed funding to eligible startups through eligible incubators across India.
- The scheme is expected to support about 3600 startups.

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT**Denmark's Artificial Energy Island Project**

The Danish government approved a plan to build an artificial island in the North Sea as part of its effort to switch to green energy.

**KeyPoints**

- The project is being called the largest construction project to be undertaken in Denmark's history with an estimated cost of DKK 210 billion.
- An energy island is based on a platform that serves as a hub for electricity generation from surrounding offshore wind farms.
- The artificial island will be located about 80 km into the North Sea and the majority of it will be owned by the Danish government.
- Its primary purpose is to provide large-scale offshore wind power.
- The idea is to connect and distribute power between Denmark and neighbouring countries.

- The move has come after the EU announced its plans to transform its electricity system to rely mostly on renewables within a decade and to increase its offshore wind energy capacity by over 25-fold by the year 2050.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Ratha Saptami**

This years' Ratha Saptami festival is being celebrated on 19th February 2021.

Key Points

- Ratha Saptami is an annual Hindu festival that is dedicated to Surya, the sun god.
- It is made of two words- 'Ratha' means Chariot and 'Saptami' means seventh.
- A one-day Brahmotsavam is held in Tirumala (Andhra Pradesh) on this day.
- Ratha Saptami is also called Surya Jayanti as it marks the birth of Surya and referred as Magha Saptami as it falls on the seventh day (Saptami) of the Hindu month Magha.
- Ratha Saptami also marks the change of season to spring and the start of the harvesting season.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. "Artificial intelligence (AI) is important for the development of humanity in the near future." Discuss the ethical implications that arise from the development and implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. (250 words)

Ans:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals.

- AI somehow gets closer to our skin than other technologies'. Perhaps this is because the project of AI is to create machines that have a feature central to how we humans see ourselves, namely as feeling, thinking, intelligent beings.
- The main purposes of an artificial intelligent agent probably involve sensing, modelling, planning and action, but current AI applications also include perception, text analysis, natural language processing (NLP), logical reasoning, game-playing, decision support systems, data analytics, predictive analytics, as well as autonomous vehicles and other forms of robotics.

Ethical Implications in development and implementation of AI Technologies

- **Machines with Moral Status:** It is not easy for machines to comply with ethical and moral standards while developing and implementing AI technologies. Even if ethical standards are set, they vary from society to society.
- **Unemployment and inequality:** By using artificial intelligence a company can drastically cut down on relying on the human workforce, and this means that revenues will go to fewer people. Consequently, individuals who have ownership in AI-driven companies will make all the money.
- **Challenges to Humanity:** Artificially intelligent bots are becoming better and better at modelling human conversation and relationships. While humans are limited in the attention and kindness that they can expend on another person, artificial bots can channel virtually unlimited resources into building relationships.
- When used right, this could evolve into an opportunity to nudge society towards more beneficial behavior. However, in the wrong hands it could prove detrimental.
- **Could Be Racist and Discriminatory:** Though artificial intelligence is capable of a speed and capacity of processing that's far beyond that of humans, it cannot always be trusted to be fair and neutral.
- We shouldn't forget that AI systems are created by humans, who can be biased and judgemental. However, if used right, or if used by those who strive for social progress, AI can become a catalyst for positive change.
- **Privacy and Security:** The more powerful a technology becomes, the more can it be used for nefarious reasons as well as good. This applies not only to robots produced to replace human soldiers, or autonomous weapons, but to AI systems that can cause damage if used maliciously.
- **Evil Genies:** It's not just adversaries we have to worry about. What if artificial intelligence itself turned against us? This doesn't mean by turning "evil" in the way a human might, or the way AI disasters are depicted in Hollywood movies. Rather, we can imagine an advanced AI system as a "genie in a bottle" that can fulfill wishes, but with terrible unforeseen consequences.

Conclusion

- Ethics is not only important in technology (Artificial Intelligence), but it should also be the foundation of any innovation. We cannot run the risk of building unethical tools.
- It is essential that we equip our people with the education, training and support they need to take on the many jobs that will be created.
- We also need to make AI responsible. Governments and businesses must work together to develop a code of ethics - tangible standards and best practices to develop and use intelligent machines.
- The ethical issues that come with AI adoption are complex. The key will be to keep these issues in mind in order to analyze the broader societal issues at play.
- Whether AI is good or bad can be examined from many different angles with no one theory or framework being the best. We need to keep learning and stay informed in order to make good decisions for our future.

DAILY QUIZ

1. The community volunteer programme Himal Sanrakshak aims to protect which of the following species?
 - a) Red Panda
 - b) Alpine Musk Deer
 - c) Snow Leopard**
 - d) Himalayan brown Bear
2. Consider the following pairs:

Blue Flag beaches	State
1. Kasarkod	Kerala
2. Rushikonda	Andhra Pradesh
3. Radhanagar	Gujarat

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?
 - a) 1 and 3 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) 2 and 3 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
3. With reference to IndiGen programme, consider the following statements:
 1. It aims to encourage development of indigenous defence technology.
 2. It is funded by DRDO (Defence Research Development Organisation)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. The Karman Line is the internationally recognized boundary between which of the following?
 - a) Inner core and outer core
 - b) Warm surface water and cold deep water in an ocean
 - c) Earth's atmosphere and outer space**
 - d) Southern Ocean and Indian Ocean
5. The Xoo infection cause huge yield losses to the cultivation of which of the following?
 - a) Barley
 - b) Rice**
 - c) Maize
 - d) Cotton