

GOVERNANCE**DigiSaksham Programme**

Recently, the Union Labour Ministry and Microsoft India have jointly launched a digital skilled platform — DigiSaksham — to enhance youth employability. This joint initiative is an extension of the ongoing programs to support the youth from rural and semi-urban areas.

Key Points**About:**

- Free of cost training in digital skills including basic skills as well as advanced computing, will be provided to more than 3 lakh youths in the first year.
- Priority will be given to the job-seekers of semi urban areas belonging to disadvantaged communities, including those who have lost their jobs due to Covid-19 pandemic. Training would be conducted at the Model Career Centres (MCCs) and National Career Service Centres (NCSC) for Scheduled Castes (SCs)/Scheduled Tribes (STs) across the country.

Implemented by:

1. Aga Khan Rural Support Programme India (AKRSP-I).
2. AKJRSP-I is a non-denominational, non-government development organization. It works as a catalyst for the betterment of rural communities by providing direct support to local communities.

Role of NCS Portal:

1. The Job Seekers can access the training through National Career Service (NCS) Portal.
2. NCS Portal is a one-stop solution that provides a wide array of employment and career related services to the citizens of India. It is implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Need:

- To bridge the gap of India's digital divide, placing the country on the path to inclusive economic recovery and preparing India's talent to thrive in a digital future catering not only to the needs of the domestic economy but also to tap the overseas employment opportunities.

Other Initiatives for Youth Employment:

1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0
2. Generation Unlimited in India (YuWaah)
3. National Career Service
4. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
5. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)
6. Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)
7. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA)

2. Best Practices in the Performance of District Hospitals

Recently, NITI Aayog has released a performance assessment report of district hospitals in India, titled 'Best Practices in the Performance of District Hospitals'.

Key Points**About the Report:**

- Collaboration: The report is an outcome of collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and WHO India.
- Data Validation: The National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers, a constituent board of the Quality Council of India, conducted the on-ground data validation. The Health Management Information System (HMIS) data for the year 2017-18 has been used as the baseline for this exercise.
- Categorisation: For this performance assessment, district hospitals were categorised into small (up to 200 beds), mid-sized (201-300 beds) and large hospitals (more than 300 beds). Of the total hospitals, 62% were small.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): The assessment evaluated 707 district hospitals on 10 KPIs based on data from 2017-18.
 1. Number of functional hospital beds per 1,00,000 population
 2. Ratio of doctors, nursing staffs and paramedical staff in position to Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norm;

3. Proportion of support services available
4. Proportion of core health care services available
5. Proportion of diagnostic services available
6. Bed occupancy rate
7. C-section rate
8. Surgical productivity index
9. OPD per doctor
10. Blood bank replacement rate

Key Findings:

- Beds per Population: On an average, a district hospital had 24 beds for 1,00,000 people.
- 1. For the assessment, it was set that a hospital should have 22 beds for that many people (IPHS 2012 guidelines).
- 2. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends five hospital beds for every 1,000 people.
- Doctor-to-Bed Ratio: Only 27% of the total 707 districts assessed met the doctor-to-bed ratio of 29 doctors per 100 beds in a hospital. 88 hospitals out of 707 had the required ratio of staff nurses.
- Ratio of Paramedical Staff: Only 399 hospitals were found to have a ratio of paramedical staff in position as IPHS norms laid down (100 paramedical staff for 500 bed hospital).
- Support Services: On an average, every district hospital in India had 11 support services, compared to the required 14.
- Diagnostic Testing Services: Only 21 hospitals fulfilled the criteria of having all diagnostic testing services available.
- Bed Occupancy: 182 hospitals out of the 707 had bed occupancy of 90% or more. Occupancy of 80-85 % is considered ideal.
- OPD Patients: On an average, a doctor in a district hospital attends to 27 OPD patients.

Suggestions:

- Increasing Resources: Adequate resources may be provided to district hospitals towards digitization. National and regional level training, workshops etc. may be organized to acknowledge as well as disseminate hospitals' best practices.
- Linking with Medical Colleges: District hospitals may be linked to the nearest medical college by employing a hub and spoke distribution model, which is a cost-effective and time-saving transport and service distribution mechanism.
- Ensuring Optimal Resource Utilization: Ensuring 24x7 availability of support services, diagnostic testing facilities, pharmacy, and well-planned shifts of medical and paramedical staff would contribute to an optimal bed occupancy and resource utilization.
- Tele-medicine Services: Hospitals should encourage care seeking among the community through extension services, as also make seeking care a hassle-free and productive experience. Tele-medicine services can help increase OPD footfalls, with convenience to patients.
- Leveraging the ANM (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife)–ASHA–Anganwadi Worker (AAA) network, institutional deliveries over home deliveries should be encouraged and ensured.

Public Healthcare in India

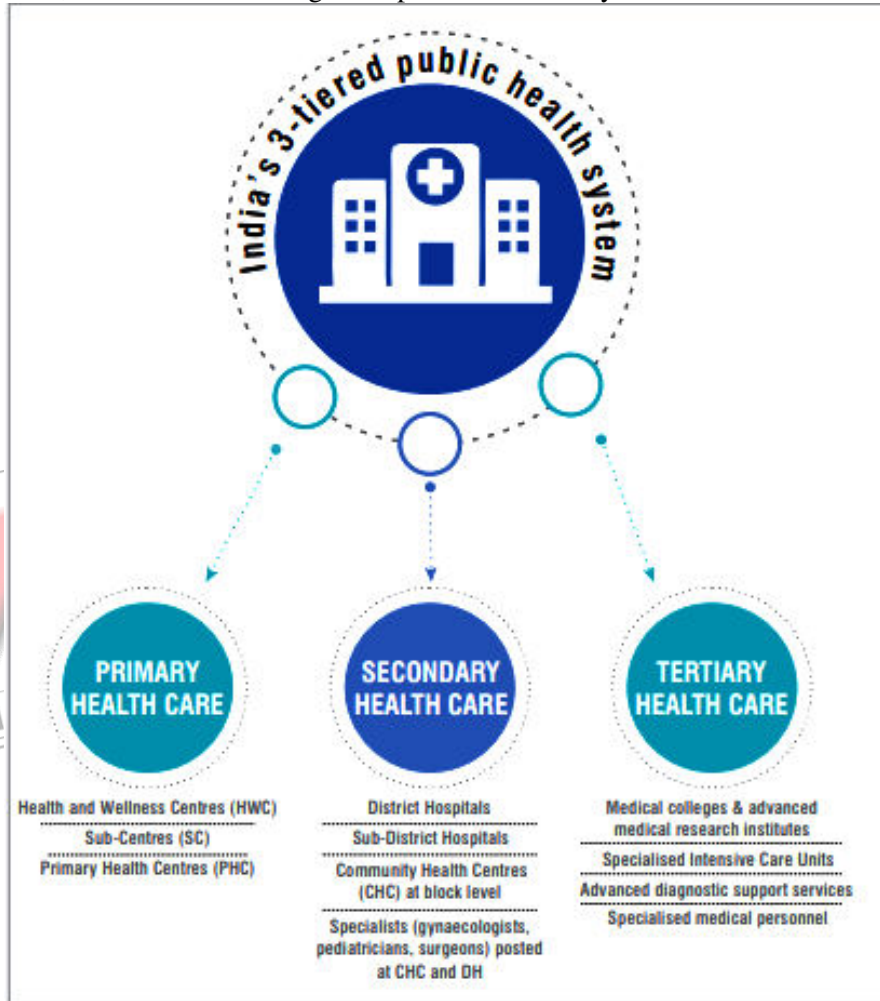
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
- 1. Policy making in the country's health sector is shaped by its federal structure and the Central-State divisions of responsibilities and financing.
- ✓ State List: Public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries are state subjects, which means the primary responsibility of their management and service delivery lies with the states.
- ✓ Union List: The Centre also invests in health services through Centrally Sponsored Schemes such as the National Health Mission (NHM) and Ayushman Bharat.
- ✓ Concurrent List: The Centre plays an important role in vital statistics, medical education, and drugs administration, among others, which are subjects in the Concurrent List, as also in planning, policy making, and funding for public health at state and national levels.

- **Digitisation of Healthcare:**

2. National Digital Health Mission (NDHM): The NDHM is a complete digital health ecosystem. The digital platform will be launched with four key features: health ID, personal health records, Digi Doctor and health facility registry.
3. Aarogya Setu App: It has an objective of enabling bluetooth based contact tracing and mapping of likely hotspots and dissemination of relevant information about Covid-19.

- **National Health Policy 2017:**

1. The policy aims to achieve universal access to good quality health care services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence.
2. It intends to gradually increase public health expenditure to 2.5% of the GDP by 2025.
3. It also envisages a three-dimensional integration of AYUSH systems encompassing cross referrals, co-location and integrative practices across systems of medicines.



NATIONAL ISSUE

Green Term Loan

Recently, NTPC Renewable Energy (NTPC-REL), a subsidiary of NTPC, has signed its first Green Term Loan agreement for installation of Solar Projects in Rajasthan & Gujarat. NTPC-REL is also constructing India's largest single local solar power park of 4.75 GW in Kutch.

- NTPC is taking various steps to make its energy portfolio greener by adding significant capacities of renewable energy sources.

Key Points

About 'Green Loan':

- A green loan is a form of financing that seeks to enable and empower businesses to finance projects which have a distinct environmental impact, or rather, which are directed towards financing 'green projects'.

Benefits of Green Loans:

- **Corporate Advantage:**
 1. It will help raise corporate value, by demonstrating that they are actively promoting Green Projects by procuring Green Loans, which could possibly earn them public acceptance.
 2. This will also help in fulfilling Corporate Social Responsibility targets.
- **Balancing Economy With Ecology:**
 1. By providing Green Loans, lenders can support the realization of the environmental benefits that contribute to creating a sustainable society, while simultaneously gaining returns on their lending.
 2. An increase in Green Loans and Green Deposits will enhance individual awareness of Green Loans.
- **Environmental Benefits:**
 1. An increase in Green Loans is expected to increase private funds in Green Projects, contributing to the substantial reduction of GHG (GreenHouse Gas) emissions and the prevention of degradation of natural capital.
 2. The promotion of Green Projects can lower energy costs, strengthen energy security, revitalize the regional economy, and enhance resilience in the event of disasters.

Other Related Concepts

- **Green Bonds:** A green bond is a debt instrument with which capital is being raised to fund 'green' projects, which typically include those relating to renewable energy, clean transportation, sustainable water management etc.
- **ESG Fund:** ESG Fund is a combination of three words i.e. environment, social and governance. It is a kind of mutual fund. Its investing is used synonymously with sustainable investing or socially responsible investing.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG)

India and the UK are likely to announce a joint declaration on "one sun, one world, one grid" — or OSOWOG at the upcoming Conference of Parties (COP26). The UN Climate Change Conference, or COP26, is scheduled to be held between 31st October and 12th November in Scotland.

The concept of OSOWOG is what the British have called a green grid. The idea behind the concept is a trans-national electricity grid supplying solar power across the globe.

Key Points

OSOWOG or the Green Grid:

- The vision behind the OSOWOG is 'The Sun Never Sets' and is a constant at some geographical location, globally, at any given point of time.
- This is by far one of the most ambitious schemes undertaken by any country (India) and is of global significance in terms of sharing economic benefits.
- It has been taken up under the technical assistance program of the World Bank.
- The OSOWOG plan may also leverage the International Solar Alliance (ISA), co-founded by India that has 80 countries as members.
- With India in the middle, the solar spectrum can easily be divided into two broad zones, which are:
 1. Far East including countries like Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Lao, Cambodia etc.
 2. Far West covering the Middle East and the Africa Region.

Three Phases of the Plan:

1. First Phase: It will entail interconnectivity within the Asian continent.
2. Second Phase: It will add Africa.
3. Third Phase: It is about global interconnection.

Significance of the Project:

- Help all the participating entities in attracting investments in renewable energy sources as well as utilizing skills, technology and finances.
- Lead to reduced project costs, higher efficiencies and increased asset utilization for all the participating entities.

- Resulting economic benefits would positively impact poverty alleviation and support in mitigating water, sanitation, food and other socio-economic challenges.
- Allow national renewable energy management centres in India to grow as regional and global management centres. This move, during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, gives India the opportunity to be seen as taking a lead in evolving global strategies.

Issues with the Project:

- **Geopolitics:**
 1. The project is seen as an Indian endeavour for world leadership but under Covid-19 uncertainties, the geopolitical implications of projects like OSOWOG are hard to decipher.
 2. The mechanism of cost-sharing will be challenging, given the varied priorities of participating countries depending on their socio-economic orders.
- **Globalisation vs De-Globalisation:**
 1. The OSOWOG will turn out to be an expensive, complex and very slow progress project.
 2. The strategic benefits, if any, of having a single grid will be obliterated in the wake of any geopolitical problem.
 3. In India, the major issue of renewable energy developers is to deal with different state governments and hence, different laws and regulations.
 4. Further, the project also contradicts the Prime Minister's Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-dependent India) vision, as it extends the reliance for a major strategic entity, energy supply, to other countries through this grid.
- **Centralised vs Distributed Generation:**
 1. There is a difference in voltage, frequency and specifications of the grid in most regions.
 2. Maintaining grid stability with just renewable generation would be technically difficult.

Way Forward

The move is the key to future renewable-based energy systems globally because regional and international interconnected green grids can enable sharing and balancing of renewable energy across international borders.

It allows grabbing opportunities to learn quickly from global developments and share renewable energy resources to reduce the global carbon footprint and insulate the societies from pandemics. Institution building is key to fulfilling the ambitions of a multi-country grid project. In this context, ISA (International Solar Alliance) can act as an independent supranational institution to take decisions about how the grid should be run and conflicts settled.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Amrit Kaal

- In his 75th Independence day speech, the Prime Minister of India referred to the period of next 25 years as the Amrit Kaal for India and her citizens.
- **The purpose of Amrit Kaal is:**
 1. To better the lives of citizens
 2. Lessen the development divide between villages and city
 3. Reduce government interference in people's lives and
 4. Have the latest technology so that India is not behind any country in the world.
- India started with the spirit of 'SabkaSaath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' and now SabkaPrayas (collaborative effort of all) is added as a very important aspect for the achievement of India's goals for development.

2.Ujjwala 2.0 Scheme

- Recently, the second phase of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) or Ujjwala 2.0 Scheme was launched.
- 1. PMUY-I was launched in May 2016 to provide LPG connections to poor households.
- 2. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- It is aimed to provide maximum benefit to the migrants who live in other states and find it difficult to submit address proof.

- A financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection will be provided to the BPL households. An additional 10 million LPG connections will be provided to the beneficiaries.

3.SACRED Portal for Elderly

In a first of its kind move, the government has come up with an online employment exchange platform to cater to senior citizens seeking job opportunities. The portal developed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is named Senior Able Citizens for Re-Employment in Dignity (SACRED).

The International Day of Older Persons is observed on 1st October each year.

Key Points

About:

- Citizens above 60 years of age can register on the portal and find jobs and work opportunities.
- The Employment Portal will serve not only the senior citizens seeking employment, but also the employers, the Self Help Groups (SHGs), the senior citizens gaining skills, and other agencies or individuals.
- An amount of Rs. 10 Cr would be provided for funding for the platform development along with maintenance grant of @ Rs. 2 Cr per year for 5 years.
- The portal is shaped on the recommendations of the Empowered Expert Committee (EEC) report on startups for the elderly.

Need:

- There is a sharp rise in India's elderly population and thrust is on creating an ecosystem that supports their needs more holistically.
- There are 110 million elders in this country, who are above the age of 60.
- According to the Longitudinal Ageing Study of India (LASI), India will have over 319 million elderly by 2050 compared to the 120 million now.
- More than 50% senior citizens are found active as per the LASI report 2020. Many senior citizens having experience, time and energy can be used by the business enterprises looking for stable employees with experience.

Other Recent Initiatives:

1. Elder Line: The first Pan-India toll-free helpline number (14567) for Senior Citizens.
2. SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine) Portal: It will be a "one-stop access" of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.

International Day of Older Persons (1st October):

1. Theme 2021: Digital Equity for All Ages
2. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2021-2030 the Decade of Healthy Aging.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. The ever-growing uncertainty of crude oil prices and geopolitical instability surrounding its supply, make it imperative for India to approach alternative fuels which are cleaner and cheaper on a mission mode. Critically Analyse. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

The recent surge in crude oil prices prompted both the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and federal think tank NITI Aayog to flag the need for the Centre and states to contain input cost pressures on businesses. A further surge could put pressure to cut taxes, which may impact revenues and spending.

Body

Crude oil prices and uncertainty: Impact on India

- **Covid and Volatile prices:** Oil prices have witnessed sharp volatility in the past. The price of India's basket of crude oil that represents the average of Oman, Dubai, and Brent plunged to \$19.90 in April last year during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

- **Increased taxes:** Last year, when crude prices slumped, Centre raised its taxes which remains in place till date. Any further rise in crude prices will burn the consumer's pockets further as they have reached more than Rs 100.
- **Trigger events cause price rise:** Crude rallied in the backdrop of hurricane Ida impacting US Gulf Coast production and a fall in US inventories. This comes at a time when global oil demand is rising. Stock markets are also dependent on such instances and events which have an impact on the Indian economy.
- Underinvestment in the global oil and gas sector could lead to tighter supplies at a time when demand is set to recover. Whilst that might be beneficial to oil producers in the short term, it also means significant costs to the global economy which is in nobody's long-term interest.
- **OPEC-cartel:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies still have a cap on oil production, while a lack of investment has limited output from the group's top two African producers.

Various alternative fuels in India: Advantages

- **Solar energy:** The country has set an ambitious target of installing 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by the year 2022, which includes -power. 100 GW from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro.
- **Wind energy:** India is likely to install 54.7 GW of wind capacity by 2022 against the 60 GW target set by the government.
- 1. India is a country having around 7,500 km long coastline and in all of its exclusive economic zones, it has enough opportunity to harness wind energy.
- 2. It is found by the National Institute for Wind Energy (based in Chennai) that western states have larger potential in terms of a stable, steady and a speedy windflow starting from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Bio-diesel:** It is ultra-low Sulphur diesel, which is also an alternative fuel produces even low pollution comparing to CNG.
- **Bio-CNG:** Bio-CNG vehicles with 20% blending in petrol is also a target the government has been chasing. Conversion of energy from Biomass is a considerable option as it will clean the cities as well as reduce our energy dependence.
- **Hydrogen:** Recently, the government has launched the National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM) in Budget 2021. The NHEM proposes a roadmap for using hydrogen as an energy source and augmenting India's growing renewable capacity with the hydrogen economy. India's electricity is heavily coal-dependent. Hydrogen will replace fossil fuels, address pollution, and oil-price rise.

Limitations of alternative fuels and their challenges

- **Reliability:** By their very nature, solar and wind energy are variable in availability both spatially as well as geographically. They are not available on-demand, unlike thermal or nuclear energy. Therefore, they have to be supplemented with other sources of energy, to maintain the base load.
- **Creation of storage infrastructure:** To overcome the variable nature of renewable sources of energy, it is vital to invest in affordable batteries of large capacity. This would require adequate commitment from the government side to inspire confidence in the private sector.
- **Funding:** As already stated, renewable energy requires setting up large projects to harness the economies of scale. This requires a large initial investment, which can be a deterrent at the beginning of the project.
- **Integration with the Main Grid:** Integrating the renewables with the main grid is the area India needs to work upon. To accelerate the uptake of renewables, storage and battery solutions is needed in large quantities.
- **Cost factor:** Renewable resources are slightly more expensive than conventional sources.
- **24*7 Power Supply:** Sustainable, round-the-clock power supply along with the storage system is a big challenge ahead.

- **Agricultural Sector:** Much power is consumed in the agricultural sector. The challenge is to provide sufficient power and energy to every household and to the agricultural sector as well.
- Huge investment is required to change today's petrol and diesel running vehicles to adopt such technologies.
- Cultivation of Jathropa and other types of biodiesels will require land which is very necessary for food crops cultivation.
- Hydrogen is explosive and problem of storage is there also.

Conclusion

India is looking at private investment to raise domestic oil and gas production, which has stagnated for the last few years. A well planned road map is needed, for which NITI Aayog is coming up with Energy Vision 2035 to achieve India's clean energy goals. Diversified energy mix is what India needs to focus on, no doubt solar and wind have a lot of potential, and Hydrogen would be a game changer in Indian energy transition space. India should be working on areas like investment in infrastructure, capacity building and better integration in the near and immediate future.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. The Tenth Schedule was introduced in the Constitution of India during the prime minister ship of

- Jawaharlal Nehru
- Lal Bahadur Shastri
- Indira Gandhi
- Rajiv Gandhi**

Q2. Consider the following statements:

- Rabies is a fatal but preventable bacterial disease.
- Rabies affects only mammals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only**
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Consider the following statements about Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- It is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations responsible for advancing knowledge on human-induced climate change.
- It was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only**
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements:

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the apex statutory body for Disaster Management in India.
- It is headed by the Home Minister of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only**
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. In which of the following state is Tal Chhapar Sanctuary located?

- Madhya Pradesh
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Uttara Pradesh
- Rajasthan**