

GOVERNANCE**India's e-passports: Passport Seva Programme (PSP)**

Recently, the government of India has announced that it will soon start issuing ePassports to citizens applying for a new passport or renewing their expiring passport.

Key Points**About:**

- The announcement is under an agreement signed between the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Tata Consultancy Services Limited (TCS) which will facilitate the next phase of the PSP (Passport Seva Programme) termed PSP-V2.0. The MEA-TCS collaboration has been a part of the passport process since 2008 and has helped in increasing digitisation of the complex process that requires multiple stakeholders across the spectrum of the vast Government network.
- Tata Consultancy Services will ensure “support functions” like “citizen interface, technology backbone, call centres, training and change management”.
- The Government will exercise “all sovereign and security related functions” in the process of issuing passports.

Passport Seva Programme (PSP):

- PSP is one of the several Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) of India. A Mission Mode Project (MMP) is an individual project within the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) that focuses on one aspect of electronic governance, such as banking, land records or commercial taxes etc.

PSP-V2.0:

- The PSP-V2.0 is an expansion and improvement of the PSP-V1.0, an e-government tool that brought new changes to the delivery of passport-related services to individuals.
- The new initiative is aimed at creating a digital platform that would be “transparent, more accessible and reliable” and that it would be backed by a trained workforce.
- This will create a state-of-the-art digital ecosystem, overhaul existing processes and integrate various wings of Government that are involved in issuance of passports.

New Features of PSP-V2.0:

- The new programme is expected to have technology upgrades including the use of the latest biometrics technology, Artificial Intelligence, Advance Data Analytics, Chat-Bot, Auto-response, Natural Language Processing, Cloud Enablement.
- The newest feature under the PSP-V2.0 will be the issuance of the new generation of passports called e-passports.

E-passports and its Significance:

- ePassport is an upgrade to the traditional passport and is aimed at making it more secure and ensuring smooth passage through immigration posts globally.
- The ePassports will be embedded with a chip that will include personal details of the holder including biographical information.
- The software for the ePassport has been developed by IIT Kanpur and the National Informatics Centre (NIC). NIC under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is the technology partner of the Government of India. NIC was established in the year 1976 with the objective to provide technology-driven solutions to Central and State Governments.
- It will ease immigration process across the world and will also increase digital safety for the passport holders.
- The e-passports will follow the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards, and will be tougher, as well as harder to destroy. ICAO is a United Nations (UN) specialized agency, established in 1944, which laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation. India is its member.

AGRICULTURE**Sweet Revolution**

Recently, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched the country's first Mobile Honey Processing Van at Village in Uttar Pradesh. Mobile Honey Processing Van that will process beekeepers' honey at their doorsteps and thus save them the hassle and the cost of taking the honey to processing plants in far off cities for processing.

This initiative is taken in pursuance of “Sweet Kranti” (Sweet Revolution).

Key Points

Benefits of ‘Mobile Honey Processing Van’:

- The transportation of honey to processing plants is an expensive affair for small farmers and beekeepers.
 1. To avoid high transportation and processing costs, a majority of beekeepers would sell their raw honey to the agents at their farms themselves at a very low price.
 2. The Processing Van will reduce the honey extraction and processing cost to the beekeepers.
 3. This will also eliminate any scope for adulteration of honey as the processing will be done at the doorsteps of the beekeepers and farmers.

About ‘Sweet Revolution’:

- It is an ambitious initiative of the Government of India for promoting apiculture, popularly known as 'beekeeping'. To provide a booster shot to Sweet Revolution, the government launched the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission in 2020 (under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare).
- It aims to accelerate the production of quality honey and other related products.
 1. The demand for good quality honey has grown over the years as it is considered a naturally nutritious product.
 2. Other apiculture products such as royal jelly, beeswax, pollens, etc., are also used extensively in different sectors like pharmaceuticals, food, beverage, beauty, and others.
- Under the Honey Mission, the KVIC provides the farmers or beekeepers –
 1. Practical training about the examination of honeybee colonies,
 2. Identification and management of bee enemies and diseases along with the management of bee colonies in all seasons.
 3. Acquaintance with apicultural equipment's and
 4. Honey extraction and wax purification. The Honey Mission programme was launched by KVIC during 2017-18.
- Technology intervention through this mission will ensure bee conservation, prevent diseases or the loss of bee colonies and provide quality and quantity of apiculture products. Farming practices will yield superior-quality honey and other products for the domestic as well as international market.
- Beekeeping is a low investment and highly skilled enterprise model, in which technology application has emerged as a great enabler for socio-economic growth. Scaling up beekeeping will double farmers' income, generate employment, ensure food security and bee conservation, and increase crop productivity.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

- KVIC is a statutory body established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956.
- The KVIC is charged with the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.
- It functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Recently, former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Urjit Patel has been appointed vice-president of the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In October 2021, the Union Minister of Finance participated in the 6th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of AIIB.

Key Points

About:

- It is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia.
- It aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future by investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors.
- It is established by the AIIB Articles of Agreement (entered into force December 2015) which is a multilateral treaty.
- It is headquartered in Beijing (China) and began its operations in January 2016.

Various Organs of AIIB:

- **Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors consists of one Governor and one Alternate Governor appointed by each member country. Governors and Alternate Governors serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.

- **Board of Directors:** Non-resident Board of Directors is responsible for the direction of the Bank's general operations, exercising all powers delegated to it by the Board of Governors.
- **Senior Management:** AIIB staff is headed by the President who is elected by AIIB shareholders for a five-year term and eligible for reelection once.
- **International Advisory Panel:** The Bank has established an International Advisory Panel (IAP) to support the President and Senior Management on the Bank's strategies and policies as well as on general operational issues.

Key Accomplishments of AIIB:

- **Rapid Growth in Worldwide Membership:** AIIB began operations in 2016 with 57 founding Members (37 regional and 20 non regional). By the end of 2020, it had 103 approved Members representing approximately 79% of the global population and 65% of global GDP.
- **Highest Credit Rating Assigned by Three Major Rating Institutions:** Since 2017, AIIB has received AAA ratings with a stable outlook from the top credit rating agencies— Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch. Industry recognition of its sound financial standing has enabled it to expand its presence in international capital markets.
- **Permanent Observer Status in the United Nations:** In 2018, AIIB was granted Permanent Observer status in the deliberations of both the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the two development-focused principal organs of the global body.
- **Governance Model Enhancing Efficiency and Accountability:** AIIB has created an effective environment for its Board of Directors to take a strategic approach to direct and oversee the work of an accountable management. The Bank's Accountability Framework is an innovative governance model that positions AIIB to embed a culture of accountability throughout the organization.
- **Policies and Strategies Developed or Finalized:** Strategies for all major infrastructure sectors and for investing in equity, mobilizing private capital and financing operations in non regional members have all been approved and being implemented.

AIIB and India:

- The AIIB has approved more loans for India than any other member of the bank. China is its biggest shareholder and India is the second-largest.
- The AIIB has funded 28 projects in India amounting to USD6.7 billion.
- It has recently emphasised green projects and supporting public health initiatives during the Covid-19 pandemic, besides infrastructure.
- In October 2021, India applied for loans from the AIIB and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to procure 667 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines with the ADB expected to lend USD1.5 billion and the AIIB around USD500 million, under the ADB's Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) initiative.
- Last year (2021), the AIIB also approved a USD356.67 million loan to the Indian government to support the expansion of the Chennai metro rail system.

PRELIMS FACT

First Multi-Dimensional Adventure Sports Expedition: NIMAS

Recently, the Defence Minister flagged-in India's first multi-dimensional adventure sports expedition conducted by National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS) in France.

Key Points

About:

- The expedition was conducted in November 2021 and the team was led by Director NIMAS comprising 12 people - eight Army personnel and four youths of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The expedition team carried out over 250 kilometres of winter trekking in the Alps Mountain Ranges, which included Tour De Mont Blanc trek covering the French, Swiss and Italian Alps.

National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports:

- It is an advanced sports training institute located in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It operates under the control and superintendence of the Ministry of Defence.
- The institute offers training across land, air and water, a first of its kind that allows civilians to experience challenges across a variety of outdoor surfaces as well as pursue a career in adventure sports. It provides structured training to defence personnel as well.

Alps

- Alps is a small segment of a discontinuous mountain chain that stretches from the Atlas Mountains of North Africa across southern Europe and Asia to beyond the Himalayas.
- The Alpine region encompasses eight European countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland. The Alps are an interzonal mountain system (Orobiome), or a “transition area” between Central and Mediterranean Europe.
- Mont Blanc is the highest peak.
- Though they are not as high and extensive as other mountain systems uplifted during the Paleogene and Neogene periods (i.e., about 65 million to 2.6 million years ago)—such as the Himalayas (great mountain system of Asia) and the Andes and Rocky mountains (in South America and North America respectively) —they are responsible for major geographic phenomena.
- The Alpine crests isolate one European region from another and are the source of many of Europe’s major rivers.
- Waters from the Alps ultimately reach the North, Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Black seas.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. What is good governance? Discuss the various dimensions of good governance in India. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

Governance comprises all of the processes of governing – whether undertaken by the government of a state, by a market or by a network – over a social system (Family, tribe, formal or informal organization, a territory or across territories) and whether through the laws, norms, power, or language of an organized society. Good governance is a means to serve the people, by fulfilling their aspirations within the constitutional framework.

Body

According to the United Nations Development Programme, Governance has been defined as the rules of the political system to solve conflicts between actors and adopt decision (legality). It has also been used to describe the “proper functioning of institutions and their acceptance by the public” (legitimacy). And it has been used to invoke the efficacy of government and the achievement of consensus by democratic means (participation)

In this context, 2nd ARC suggested various measures to improve governance, therefore the word ‘good governance’ implies:

1. Responsive, accountable, sustainable and efficient administration at all levels.
2. Further, transparency, accountability, rule of law, principle of subsidiarity and citizen first form basics of good governance.
3. For ex.- delivery of services like PDS shall be quick, devoid of middlemen, reach even the most marginalised at minimum cost.

Components of Good Governance (according to the World Bank):

1. Capacity and efficiency in public sector management
2. Accountability
3. Legal framework for development
4. Information and transparency

Some of the good governance measures undertaken in India

- The breaking of governance silos through better coordination among various ministries with initiatives like PM Gatishakti, PRAGATI, capacity building through Mission KarmYogi, focused emphasis on simplifying procedures and reducing the compliance burden on businesses, individuals, and other stakeholders are ensuring better delivery of public services.
- The implementation of GST, labour codes, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, New Education Policy, Mudra, PM Awas Schemes, PM Kisan, and seamless faceless resolution of tax disputes are initiatives that have strengthened transparency, responsiveness and other dimensions of good governance.
- India’s Ease of Doing Business rank has risen from 145 in 2015 to 63 in 2020.
- Similarly, the Global Innovation Index ranking has improved from 81 (2015) to 46 (2021).

Way forward

- Measures to enhance good governance, such as the Right to Information Act, social audits, and public service guarantee acts in various States is necessary.

- Need for a fresh perspective from the outside—for example, bringing in a consultant who specializes in type of change with your type of organization—to encourage people to see that workable alternatives are possible.
- Top-Down approach: The bosses at the top should lead by example. Changes will automatically trickle down to the lowest level.
- An effective multi-generational team will work within an environment that doesn't intimidate and allows for ownership of the vision at all levels.
- The process of change within a bureaucracy to be slower than you might like. Create a phased implementation that the organization can digest change a little at a time.
- The changes will encounter some resistance, and it needs to be combated gradually through constant and clear communication at all levels.
- Make technology employee-friendly, increase their ease of use and educate employees about the advantages and benefits of how technology eases work.
- Transparent and objective performance assessment system to keep the staff motivated.
- Accountability towards decision making to be instilled in the organization.
- Social audits need to be strengthened by educating and make people aware.
- During policy formation and implementation, civil society members should be consulted so that the measures should be taken properly.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements about the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):

1. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN).
2. It is responsible for appointing the non-permanent members to the Security Council.
3. It is the only UN organ wherein all member states have equal representation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q2. Which one of the following Indian state shares the largest border with Myanmar?

- a. Arunachal Pradesh**
- b. Nagaland
- c. Mizoram
- d. Manipur

Q3. Recently, which one of the following state government has launched the 'Meendum Manjappai' campaign?

- a. Kerala
- b. West Bengal
- c. Karnataka
- d. Tamil Nadu**

Q4. In the context of the developments in Bioinformatics, the term 'transcriptome', sometimes seen in the news, refers to

- a. a range of enzymes used in genome editing
- b. the full range of mRNA molecules expressed by an organism**
- c. the description of the mechanism of gene expression
- d. a mechanism of genetic mutations taking place in cells

Q5. With reference to the 'Gram Nyayalaya Act', which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. As per the Act, Gram Nyayalayas can hear only civil cases and not criminal cases.
2. The Act allows local social activists as mediators/reconciliators.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only**
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2