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GENERAL STUDIES-2

GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND POLICIES

NITI'S SATH PROGRAM

SATH: Sustainable Action for Transforming Human capital

Vision: to initiate transformation in the education and health sectors with the State Governments' co operation

Details:

The program addresses the need expressed by many states for technical support from NITI.

SATH aims to identify and build three future 'role model' states for health systems.

- NITI will work in close collaboration with their state machinery to design a robust roadmap for all the stages of program execution and monitoring and tracking to achieve the end objectives.
- The program will be implemented by NITI along with McKinsey & Company and IPE Global consortium

TELE-LAW FOR LEGAL AID IN RURAL INDIA

GoI has launched 'Tele-law' to make legal aid easily accessible to the marginalized communities and citizens living in rural areas.

Ministry: Ministry of Law and Justice in partnership with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

Details

A portal called 'Tele-Law' will be launched, which will be available across the Common Service Centre (CSC) network. This will connect the citizens to legal service providers with the help of technology enabled platforms.

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- People can seek legal advice from lawyers through video conferencing at CSCs.
- Law school clinics, District Legal Service Authorities, voluntary service providers and Non-Government Organisations working on legal aid and empowerment shall also be connected through the CSCs
- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) will provide a panel of lawyers from State capitals, who will be available through video conferencing to provide legal advice.
- A robust monitoring and evaluation system is also being designed which will help in assessing the quality of legal advice provided.
- Under this scheme, every Common Service Centre (CSC) will engage a Para Legal Volunteer (PLV), who will be the first point of contact. A trained PLV will be available in a CSC for ten days in a month.
- Women PLVs will be encouraged and trained under the Scheme.
- They will also submit the records maintained to the District Legal Service Authority every week, after which NALSA will provide a panel of lawyers

WELFARE SCHEMES AND DEVELOPMENTAL GROUPS

NATIONAL AWARD FOR WATER CONSERVATION

Model: Project Jal Sanchay

Adopted by: Authorities in Nalanda district of Bihar, under the Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee programme (MGNREGP), by the ministry of rural development.

Details

- Was launched to offer solutions to water crisis.
- Check dams were created and traditional Aahar-Pyne irrigation system and traditional water bodies were desilted and renovated
- Campaigns to create awareness about rainwater harvesting.

EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS (EMRS)

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Ministry: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Objective

To further educational opportunities for more ST children in all the 672 Blocks where ST population is more than 50% of the total population in a span of next five years.

Scheme started in: 1998

Details

As per existing EMRS Guidelines of 2010, at least one EMRS is to be set up in each Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) / Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) having 50% ST population in the area.

ICMR STUDY ON DIABETES

It is the largest study on diabetes to include 14 states and a UT, sampling both rural and urban populations and it is the first to include diabetes data on the Northeast.

Findings

The data show large variations in region-specific prevalence of both diabetes — ranging from 4.3% in Bihar to 13.6% in Chandigarh.

- Drastically modified lifestyles over a single generation, particularly with respect to decrease in physical activity levels and adoption of western-style fast foods and sweetened beverages, especially by the younger generation in the urban areas has made diabetes twice as common in urban settings compared to rural.
- Dietary patterns that include high intake of refined grains, processed meats, added sugars, and low-fibre diets, have been associated with increased diabetes risk.
- High prevalence of pre-diabetes — one in every 10 individuals — means there are a huge number of people who will eventually develop diabetes in the near future.
- Increased sedentary behaviour such as watching TV, the rise in obesity, exposure to environmental pollutants, depression, and reduced sleep patterns are other reasons.

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And people of low Socio Economic Status are now affected?

The findings show the prevalence of diabetes is higher among individuals of low SES than among high SES in urban areas of certain high income states, whereas, in rural areas, diabetes is more prevalent among individuals in the higher SES. Prevalence also seems to be higher in states with higher per capita income.

Way forward

Awareness of the condition is low, and is frequently not diagnosed until complications appear. Low literacy is a problem.

- Community based mass awareness programmes are extremely important.
- There is a need for comprehensive diabetes education for all individuals above the age of 30.
- Education about diabetes and the need for regular checkups, as well as screening, will go a long way in reducing the burden of the disease.
- Most of the treatment cost of diabetes is out-of-pocket expense, which puts a huge burden on patients and their families. Given the lifelong expenditure associated with diabetes and related co-morbidities, many individuals and families are unable to cope. The burden can be reduced by ensuring universal healthcare coverage, access to affordable medicines, early detection and treatment, and increased awareness.

INDIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SWITZERLAND EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR INDIA'S NSG BID

Switzerland, which will adorn the chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), said that it would endorse India's bid for membership. However, the option of considering Pakistan's entry into the group was left open.

Earlier effort and a backgrounder

India sought membership of the NSG in 2008, but its application hasn't been decided on, for India is not a signatory to NPT, which is a pre-requisite for admission. However, India has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.

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India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan are the four UN member states which have not signed the NPT, the international pact aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

The “Grossi process” mandates the former NSG chairperson and diplomat Rafael Grossi to build a consensus among all 48 countries of the NSG, some of which resisted India’s membership bid at the Seoul session in 2016, citing India to be a non-signatory of NPT(Non-proliferation treaty)

NSG:

Established: 1974

Why? As a reaction to India’s nuclear tests and to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.

It is a multinational body which aims to reduce nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials, that may assist nuclear weapon development. It strives to improve safeguards and protection on existing materials.

Advantages of being a member

- Gets timely information on nuclear matters.
- Has credentials and improves transparency
- Can act as an instrument of harmonization and coordination.

KALADAN PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION IN MYANMAR

The project is for building a road connecting Paletwa river terminal in Myanmar to Mizoram border awarded to the GoI.

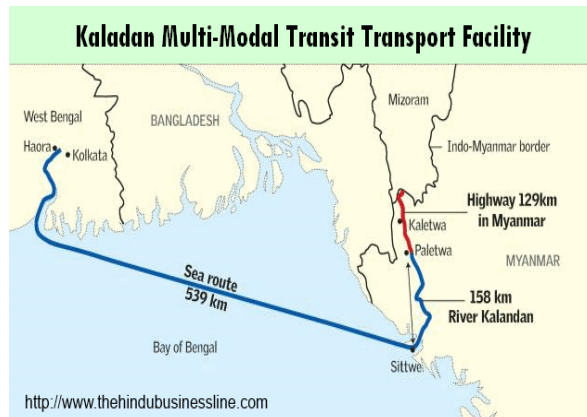
Backgrounder:

India entered a framework agreement with Myanmar for Kaladan project in 2008. Work started in 2010 with 2015 as deadline. But, no headway was made because of inadequate fund allocation and planning failure. The new deadline is set for 2019.

Kaladan project:

The project connects Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border.

- Jointly initiated by India and Myanmar to create a multi-modal platform for cargo shipments from the eastern ports to Myanmar and to the North-eastern parts of the country, thus promoting economic development in the region
- It will also add value to the economic, commercial and strategic ties between India and Myanmar.
- This project will reduce distance from Kolkata to Sittwe and will reduce the need to transport good through the narrow Siliguri corridor, also known as Chicken's Neck.



MOVEMENT ALONG MYANMAR BORDER TO BE RESTRICTED?

In a significant departure from India's policy towards Myanmar, with which India shares unfenced borders, the Union Home ministry is contemplating methods to curb the misuse of free movement regime. A committee has been constituted in this regard

Why curbs are needed?

Free movement regime is being misused by militants and trans-border criminals who smuggle weapons, contraband goods and fake Indian currency notes. They enter India, commit crimes and escape to their relatively safer hideouts.

Free movement regime (FMR):

Myanmar was carved out as a separate State in 1935. After 1947, with decolonization, ethnic minorities living along the Indo-Myanmar border got divided.



Nagas in particular found the newly created boundary to be inconsistent with the traditional boundaries of the region they inhabited. They had a deep sense of insecurity as they were reduced to ethnic minorities on both sides of the border.

To address their concerns, the Indian and Myanmarese governments established the Free Movement Regime (FMR), which allowed Nagas to travel 16 kilometres across the border on either side without any visa requirements.

AN INDIAN GETS ELECTED TO INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA

Neeru Chada, an international law expert, got elected to a top UN judicial body. She is the first Indian woman to be appointed as a judge at the International tribunal for the law of sea.

Details

She is elected for a period of 9 years. Chadha is only the second woman to be a part of ITLOS, since its inception

ITLOS

Based in: Hamburg, Germany

Established: 1996

- India is a signatory to this convention.
- It is one of the dispute settlement mechanisms under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1994.
- The Tribunal has the power to settle disputes

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

INDIA AND UNOSSC COME TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

India and the UN Office for South- South Cooperation have launched The India-UN Development Partnership Fund that will support sustainable development projects across the developing world.

The fund will be managed by UNOSSC. It will support Southern owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational

UNOSSC:

Established by: UN general assembly

Hosted by: UN development program since 1974

Objective: To advocate for and coordinate South-South cooperation on a global and UN system-wide basis.

UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance from the General Assembly and through its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

sustainable development projects across the developing world.

Details

- Focus is on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
- United Nations agencies will implement the Fund's projects in close collaboration with partnering governments.
- The fund aims towards achieving the 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

INDIA AND ILO CONVENTIONS

Why in news?

India ratified two key ILO conventions on child labour

1. The Minimum Age Convention
2. The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention

Minimum Age Convention:

It is concerned with the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment.

It requires the party states to devise national policies for abolition of child labor and to progressively raise the minimum age for admission to employment.

- Countries are free to specify a minimum age with a minimum of 15 years.
- Admission to work at 14 years is allowed only for a specified period of time.
- Laws can permit light work for children aged 13–15 (not harming their health or school work).
- 18 years has been prescribed as the minimum age for work which "is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons".

ILO and India

India is a founder member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which came into existence in 1919.

- At present, the ILO has 187 members.
- The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up of International standards in the form of Conventions, Recommendations and Protocol.

India had so far ratified 45 Conventions, out of which 42 are in force. Out of these 42 are Fundamental or Core Conventions.

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention:

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Under this convention, a country commits itself to take immediate action to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is responsible for assisting countries in this regard as well as monitoring compliance.

PANAMA SUPPORTS ONE-CHINA POLICY

Panama has decided to recognize Taiwan as an indispensable part of China, thus lending support to 'One-china Policy'

Such a diplomatic shift in Panama's stance, Taiwan's decades-old attempt to act as a "sovereign country" would likely face fresh challenges.

One-China Policy

The policy states in diplomatic acknowledgement that there is only one Chinese government. Under the policy, any country that wants diplomatic relations with mainland China must break official ties with Taipei that it

Backgrounder

For years now, Beijing has been trying to cajole Taiwan to accept itself as a part of China. A year ago, Taiwan had diplomatic ties with 23 countries. But in the last one year itself, as many as three countries have severed diplomatic ties with the country



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GENERAL STUDIES-3

INDIAN ECONOMY

FINANCIAL RESOLUTION AND DEPOSIT INSURANCE BILL, 2017

The Bill would provide for a comprehensive resolution framework for specified financial sector entities to deal with bankruptcy situation in banks, insurance companies and financial sector entities.

- The Bill envisages setting up of the Resolution Corporation.
- It will result in the repealing of the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961 to transfer the deposit insurance powers and responsibilities to the Resolution Corporation.
- The Resolution Corporation would protect the stability and resilience of the financial system
- It protects the consumers of covered obligations and protects public funds.
- It aims to inculcate discipline among financial service providers in the event of financial crises by limiting the use of public money to bail out distressed entities.

INDIA'S POSITION IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN

The global economy has been recovering from the recession of 2009 at a slow rate (at approximately 2.5 per cent per annum). However, Indian economy is in a 'fairly good shape' and it is likely to be less affected than other emerging economies if there is a further shock to the global economy.

Causes for a tepid growth rate:

- Declining populations in developed countries as well as developing countries thus posing the problem of shortage of workforce.
- Protectionism- whereby global trade and cross-border flow of people is obstructed.
- No major productivity-enhancing revolution. The fourth industrial revolution is yet to take place.
- China's economy is expected to steadily slow down, thanks to its rebalancing policy

Why is India less vulnerable?

- Growing political instability in developed countries which lead in the export market may cede ground for Indian products. Also, these countries are tending towards protectionist policies
- Despite the US's importance as a market for India and Japan, the larger and more diverse nature of these economies provides them with some cushioning from protectionist trade policies, with shipments to the US making up only 2 per cent and 3 per cent of their respective GDPs.
- India is most insulated from China's slowdown, unlike other Asian economies which would see a higher rate of slowdown.
- India's domestic market serves as a major driver for economic growth and hence acts as a protective shield to global demand shocks.
- India is in the middle of a demographic dividend which would be an impetus to growth, if the new entrants to the work force are productively employed
- Massive drives like Make in India, Skill India, productivity-based infrastructure development and initiatives related to the ease of doing business will surely help.
- The rationalisation of subsidies and direct cash transfers will plug leakages associated with the previous subsidy regime and make money available for merit subsidies — health, education, etc. — that can help us exploit our population dividend.

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Challenges:

The global financial crisis largely passed India by; so, our need for quantitative easing was limited. But we have created our own crisis — non-performing assets (NPA). However, the government is working to resolve the issue.

Road map for the future

- Improving ease of doing business
- Infrastructure improvement
- Fiscal reforms — such as GST
- Agriculture reforms
- Administrative reforms
- Labor reforms

BANKRUPTCY LAW — AND THE NEED TO HAVE ONE

India's new bankruptcy law — which came into force at the end of last year

Why India needs a bankruptcy law?

The failure of businesses impacts employees, shareholders, lenders, and the broader economy. There are delays in making decisions on the viability of businesses, tactics employed by company promoters to delay reorganisation or attempts to sell off assets, changes of management, or litigation that goes on and on.

The drag on new business units, jobs, income generation and economic growth can be significant, due to such delays.

Do we have some mechanisms in place already?

India does have some laws — including one on Securitisation and Enforcement of Security — and other mechanisms, like Corporate Debt Restructuring or CDR, to address the problem of insolvency of firms.

But the fact is some of these laws, such as the Sick Industrial Companies Act or SICA, have not worked because of inefficient enforcement and court delays.

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How can the new law help?

Focuses on speedy closure of firms which are on the edge of restructuring or sold off

Assets can be put to good use and the firm can be revived, if decisions are quick. Delayed decisions cause destruction of value for all involved.

Banks or lenders can lend the recovered money again, promoting efficient allocation of resources, besides development of financial markets such as a bond market

An efficient and swift insolvency regime ensures greater availability of credit or funds for businesses by freeing up capital, and is thought to boost innovation and productivity.

New institutions

A timeline of 180 days — extendable by 90 days — to deal with applications for resolving cases of insolvency or bankruptcy is set.

- During this period, the management of the distressed firm or debtor could be placed in the hands of a resolution professional, who would be supervised by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India or IBBI. It also envisages them getting into talks to revive firms, and work out a repayment plan.
- A Debt Recovery Tribunal is the adjudicating authority over both individuals and companies with unlimited liability.
- The National Company Law Tribunal will be the adjudicating authority with jurisdiction over companies with limited liability.

Financial sector insolvencies

The new law promotes the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) as resolution corporation. The aim is to either close firms that can't be revived, or change their management to protect investors or depositors. This is important because the failure of large banks or institutions imposes costs on taxpayers in the form of bailouts or capital infusion.

India's central bank is mandated to direct local lenders to quickly resolve hundreds of cases of firms that have defaulted on their loans, as well as investors — known as vulture funds — who swoop on such assets, hoping to buy them at rock bottom rates, and make money down the line, following a turnaround.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NAG MISSILE

It is an Anti-Tank Guided Missile Nag. It is a part of integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP), which also involves the development of four other missiles that are Agni, Akash, Trishul and Prithvi.

- Nag is a third-generation, fire-and-forget
- Developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
- Designed to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets.
- Nag can be launched from land and air-based platforms. The land version is currently available for integration on the Nag missile carrier (NAMICA).

MC-21 TO CONTEST AIRBUS AND BOEING

MC-21 or MS-21 is a medium-range commercial passenger aircraft being developed by Russia

Range

6,000 km

Significance

This is Russia's first commercial aircraft since the collapse of the Soviet empire, after which it lost ground to western countries. Russia hopes the plane will take on aviation giants like the France-based Airbus and the American Boeing.

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Over the past three years, Russia has been pushed into a corner by economic sanctions imposed on it by the West due to its role in the Ukraine crisis. It has been desperately trying to regain economic stability in the light of these sanctions and hence rejuvenation of domestic production as the main strategy to reduce the country's dependence on foreign firms is of extreme importance.

CSIR'S AGREEMENT WITH ETHIOPIA

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has entered into an agreement with the Metal Industries Development Institute (MIDI), Ethiopia to implement a twinning programme, to build R&D capacity of MIDI.

- It is a multi-million US dollar assignment.

CSIR:

Established: 1942

Funded by: Ministry of Science and Technology, it operates as an autonomous body registered under the Registration of Societies Act of 1860.

It is an autonomous body and the largest research and development (R&D) organisation in India.

- The research and development activities of CSIR includes aerospace engineering, Structural engineering, ocean sciences, Life sciences, metallurgy, chemicals, mining, food, petroleum, leather, and environment.

ENVIRONMENT

COLOR CHANGE AT BOSPHORUS

The Bosphorus Strait has changed the colors all of a sudden.

Where is it located?

It divides the continents of Europe and Asia



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Details

It naturally connects the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. It is a very strategic waterway. It divides Turkey.

Why has the color changed anyways?

- A surge in numbers of the micro-organism *Emiliana Huxleyi*
- *Emiliana huxleyi* is a single-celled organism visible only under a microscope.
- It has astonishing adaptability thus able to thrive in waters from the equator to the sub-Arctic.

NEW BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS IN GOA

Three new sites in Goa have been recognized as hotspots for protection by BirdLife International, a conservation organisation. The sites have been added to their list of “**Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas**”.

- **There are a total seven areas in Goa now, including the newly added, which have been termed important biodiversity areas by BirdLife.**
- Newly added: **Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Navelim Wetlands and Netravati Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Significance

Declaring a site as an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area does not ensure that the site gets legal protection or becomes inaccessible to people.** Instead BirdLife International encourages national and State governments to recognise the areas as sites of vital importance for conservation of wildlife and to empower local community-based conservation initiatives.

Birdlife international:

Formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation

- It is a global partnership of conservation organisations
- Strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability
- It is **the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.**
- Publishes a **quarterly magazine, World Birdwatch**
- It is **the official Red List authority for birds**, for the International Union for

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