General Studies-2

Ayushman Bharat

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on Monday reviewed the progress of preparations towards the launch of the ambitious Health Assurance programme under Ayushman Bharat.

The Prime Minister was apprised of the preparation done so far, including consultations with States, for the smooth and expeditious rollout of the Health Assurance programme.

About Ayushman Bharat:

The scheme will provide a cover of upto Rs. 5 lakh per family.

Target: The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.

Role of state governments: State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.

Council: For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.

Who is eligible?

It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.

- The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucharoof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in

the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour.

- Also, automatically included families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour. For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme.

The Prime Minister stressed on providing maximum benefit to the poor and marginalized sections of society, under this scheme.

Guatemala supports India for UNSC bid:

Agreeing to push the 'complementary' and 'not competitive' nature of bilateral relations to a new level for mutual benefit from the emerging opportunities in both the countries, India and Guatemala today agreed to support each other's candidature for Non-Permanent Membership in the United Nations Security Council.

Guatemala will support India's candidature for UNSC membership for 2021-22 while New Delhi will do so for 2031-32 for Guatemala.

This decision was one of the several outcomes of extensive talks Vice President of India Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu held with the President, Vice President and Parliament Speaker of Guatemala in the capital Guatemala City on May 7, 2018.

National Nutrition Mission

Why in News?

The Government of India signed a loan deal worth $ 200 million with the World Bank today for the National Nutrition Mission (*POSHAN Abhiyaan*).

The loan would help the Government of India in achieving its goal of reducing stunting in children 0-6 years of age from 38.4% to 25% by the year 2022.

About Poshan:

The POSHAN (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment) Abhiyaan was launched by the Prime Minister on 8th March 2018 at Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.

The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

A large component of POSHAN Abhiyaan involves gradual scaling-up of the interventions supported by the ongoing World Bank assisted Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP) to all districts in the country over a 3-year period.

The loan approved today will support the first phase scale up to 315 districts across all states and union territories (UTs).

With a focus on improving the coverage and quality of ICDS nutrition services to pregnant and lactating women and children under 3 years of age, the project will include investments in improving the skills and capacities of ICDS staff and community nutrition workers, instituting mechanisms of community mobilization and behavior change communication, strengthening systems of citizen engagement and grievance redress and establishing mobile technology based tools for improved monitoring and management of services for better outreach to beneficiaries during the critical 1,000 day window for nutrition impact.

The project will additionally ensure convergence of all nutrition related schemes and provide performance based incentives to states and community nutrition and health workers, facilitating a focus on results.

One Stop Centres

In the Programme Approval Board (PAB) meeting of the Ministry of Women and Child Development today, 100 additional One Stop Centres have been approved in the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

The Ministry of Women & Child Development has set up 182 Centres till date under the scheme of One Stop Centres (OSCs) for women affected by violence since April, 2015.

Over 1.3 lakhs such women affected by violence have been assisted at these centres till date in 33 States/UTs.

Objectives of OSC:

The purpose of these OSCs is to facilitate integrated services for women affected with violence such as police assistance, medical aid, psycho-social counselling, legal aid/counselling, temporary stay for 5 days etc. such that aggrieved women can avail services under one roof.

As per the Cabinet Decision in the meeting dated 21st April,2018 it was decided that in the coming years every district will be covered by one OSC and each OSC will be strengthened with an additional annual grant of Rs. 50,000 for immediate assistance for first aid.

Also, the scheme of Universalization of Women's Helpline (181) of the Ministry that was also started in April, 2015 has now become operational in 30 States/UTs.

Every OSC is integrated to this Women Helpline. The Helplines have assisted over 16.5 lakh women so far.

General Studies-3

NITI Aayog and Google sign SoI to help grow AI ecosystem in India

Aim: To focus on training, hackathons, mentoring startups, and providing research grants

Aiming to foster growth for India's nascent artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) ecosystem, NITI Aayog and Google have come together to work on a range of initiatives to help build the AI ecosystem across the country.

A Statement of Intent (SoI) was signed to this effect by Ms. Anna Roy, Advisor, NITI Aayog and Shri Rajan Anandan, Vice President, India and South East Asia, Google in the presence of the Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog.

About the Initiative:

The NITI Aayog has been entrusted to setup a national programme to conduct research and development in frontier technologies such as AI.

In furtherance of this mandate, NITI Aayog has been developing India's national strategy on AI along with the National Data and Analytics Portal to enable the wide deployment and use of AI.

Importance of initiative:

Artificial Intelligence is going to disrupt the way business is done and India, in particular, is uniquely poised in utilising AI to innovate for social and inclusive good.

India is embracing future technologies such as machine learning and AI to augment its capacity in healthcare, improve outcomes in education, develop innovative governance systems for our citizens and improve overall economic productivity of the nation.

NITI's partnership with Google will unlock massive training initiatives, support startups and encourage AI research through PhD scholarships, all of which contributes to the larger idea of a technologically-empowered New India."

Role of Google:

Under the aegis of this program, Google will train and incubate Indian AI startups in an accelerator program.

These startups will be mentored and coached by Google and its affiliates to enable them to better leverage AI in their respective business models.

To help bolster the research ecosystem, one of the initiatives includes funding Indian researchers, scholars and university faculty for conducting AI-based research.

Further, Google will also bring its online training courses on AI to students, graduates and engineers to numerous cities across India, in the form of study groups and developer-run courses.

NITI Aayog and Google will organize a AI/ML hackathon that will be focused on solving key challenges within agriculture, education, healthcare, financial inclusion, transportation/mobility and more.

This hackathon may use Kaggle, a global platform, to help facilitate international participation into these planned hackathon challenges.

Google through the NITI Aayog, will conduct hands-on training programs that aim to sensitise policymakers and technical experts in governments about relevant AI tools, and how they can be used to streamline governance.

Indus dolphins Census

Why in News?

For the conservation of Indus dolphins – one of the world's rarest mammals – the Punjab government along with WWF-India are conducting the first organised census on their population.

About Indus Dolphins:

- A blind species that communicates through echo like bats do, Indus dolphins are one of the seven freshwater dolphins found across the world.
- They are found only in India and Pakistan. In Punjab, they are confined to only a 185 km stretch between Talwara and Harike Barrage in India's Beas river in Punjab.
- The most flourishing population of the Indus dolphin, platanista gangetica minor, is found across Pakistan where their numbers are estimated to be around 1,800 over a stretch of 1,500 km of the Indus river.

It is listed by the IUCN as endangered on its red list of threatened species. IUCN suspects the population size of the Indus river dolphins has reduced by more than 50% since 1944.