

OFFICERS' PULSE

Issue no. 29 | 12th December to 18th December, 2021



THE BEST VIEW
COMES AFTER
THE HARDEST
CLIMB

AT A GLANCE
& IN DEPTH.

COVERAGE.

The Hindu

The Indian Express

PIB

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Polity and Social Issues

Economy

International Relations

Environment

Science and Tech

Culture

CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY
THE **PULSE** OF UPSC AT YOUR FINGER TIPS



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act

Key Provisions of the Act

- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 addresses the issue of workplace sexual harassment faced by women in **private institutions and government organisations**.
- The act superseded **Vishakha Guidelines** laid down by the Supreme Court in 1997.
- The Act defines sexual harassment at the work place and creates a mechanism for redressal of complaints. It also provides safeguards against false or malicious charges.

Definition of Workplace

- Under the Act, a workplace is defined as “any place visited by the employee arising out of or during the course of employment, including transportation provided by the employer for undertaking such a journey.”
- As per this definition, a workplace covers **both the organised and unorganised sectors**.
- It also includes all workplaces whether owned by Indian or foreign company having a place of work in India.
- As per the Act, workplace includes:-
 - Government organizations, including Government company, corporations and cooperative societies;-
 - Private sector organisations, venture, society, trust, NGO or service providers etc. providing services which are commercial, vocational, educational, sports, professional, entertainment, industrial, health related or financial activities, including production, supply, sale, distribution or service;-

- Hospitals/Nursing Homes;-
- Sports Institutes/Facilities;-
- Places visited by the employee (including while on travel) including transportation provided by employer;
- A dwelling place or house.

ICC & LCC

- Every employer is required to constitute an **Internal Complaints Committee** at each office or branch with **10 or more employees**.
- Every district will have a **Local Complaints Committee (LCC)** so as to enable women in the unorganised sector or small establishments to work in an environment free of sexual harassment.
- The LCC will receive complaints:
 - From women working in an organisation having less than 10 workers;
 - When the complaint is against the employer himself;
 - From domestic workers.
- At least **50 percent** of the nominated members in any Internal or Local Committee must be women.
- The Complaints Committees have the powers of **civil courts** for gathering evidence.
- The Complaints Committees are required to provide for **conciliation** before initiating an inquiry, if requested by the complainant.

SHe-Box

- To facilitate lodging of complaints under the Act, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) developed an online complaint portal titled Sexual Harassment Electronic Box (SHe-Box) in 2017 to **facilitate the registration of complaints related to sexual harassment of women at work place**.
- Once a complaint is registered in the SHe-Box, it directly reaches the concerned authorities having jurisdiction to take

action in the matter. The responsibility to take action on such complaints as well as to ensure updating of status in that regard on SHE Box, is with the concerned authorities.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development issued advisories to States/UTs and the Central Ministries/Departments for strict implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and the SHE-Box portal to create a women friendly work environment.

2) Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana

Background

- Substantial dependence on rainfall makes cultivation in unirrigated areas a high risk, less productive profession. Empirical evidence suggests that assured or protective irrigation encourages farmers to invest more in farming technology and inputs leading to productivity enhancement and increased farm income.

About the scheme

- The vision of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) is to ensure **access to some means of protective irrigation to all agricultural farms** in the country, to produce **'per drop more crop'**, thus bringing much desired rural prosperity.
- Launched in 2015 by the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**, PMKSY has **been conceived amalgamating ongoing schemes** viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and the On Farm Water Management (OFWM).

Broad objectives of PMKSY

- Achieve **convergence of investments in irrigation** at the field level (preparation of district level and, if required, sub district level water use plans).
- **Enhance the physical access of water** on the farm and expand cultivable area under assured irrigation (Har Khet ko pani),

- Integration of water source, distribution and its efficient use, to make best use of water through appropriate technologies and practices.
- **Improve on-farm water use efficiency** to reduce wastage and increase availability both in duration and extent.
- Enhance the adoption of **precision-irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop)**.
- Enhance recharge of aquifers and introduce sustainable water conservation practices.

Four components of PMKSY:

- **Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP)**,
 - To focus on faster completion of ongoing Major and Medium Irrigation including National Projects.
- **Har Khet Ko Pani ('all fields will get water')**,
 - Activities including Creation of new water sources through Minor Irrigation and Creation and rejuvenation of traditional water storage systems like Jal Mandir (Gujarat); Khatri, Kuhl (H.P.); Zabo (Nagaland); Eri, Ooranis (T.N.); Dongs (Assam); Katas, Bandhas (Odisha and M.P.) etc. at feasible locations.
- **Per Drop More Crop**
 - Promoting efficient water conveyance and precision water application devices like drips, sprinklers, pivots, rain-guns in the farm.
- **Watershed Development**
 - Effective rainfall management like field bunding, contour bunding/trenching, staggered trenching, land levelling, mulching etc. and Creating Water harvesting structures such as check dams, nala bund, farm ponds, tanks etc.

Implementation

- PMKSY adopts a **'decentralized State level planning and projectized execution'** structure that allows States to draw up their own irrigation development plans based on **District**

Irrigation Plan (DIP) and State Irrigation Plan (SIP).

- PMKSY acts as a convergence platform for all water sector activities including drinking water & sanitation, MGNREGA, application of science & technology etc. through comprehensive plans.

Why in News?

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister

Narendra Modi has approved implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana for 2021-26 with an outlay of Rs.93,068 crore.

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ENVIRONMENT

1) Zero Budget Natural Farming

About ZBNF

- In the recent past, there has been a global demand to shift to sustainable farming systems, such as Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF).
- ZBNF is a method of **chemical-free agriculture drawing from traditional Indian practices**.
- It was originally promoted by **Maharashtrian agriculturist** and Padma Shri recipient **Subhash Palekar**, who developed it in the mid-1990s as an alternative to the Green Revolution's methods driven by chemical fertilizers and pesticides and intensive irrigation.
- Without the need to spend money on these inputs or take loans to buy them, the cost of production could be reduced and **farming made into a "zero budget" exercise**, breaking the debt cycle for many small farmers.
- ZBNF is also **against vermicomposting**, which is the mainstay of typical organic farming.

Jeevamrutha

- Instead of commercially produced chemical inputs, the ZBNF promotes the application of jeevamrutha, a **mixture of fresh desi cow dung and aged desi cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour, water and soil** on farmland.
- This is a fermented microbial culture that **adds nutrients to the soil**, and acts as a **catalytic agent** to promote the activity of microorganisms and earthworms in the soil.
- About 200 litres of jeevamrutha should be sprayed twice a month per acre of land. Only one local indian breed cow is needed for 30 acres of land.

Other techniques in ZBNF

- The ZBNF method also promotes **soil aeration, minimal watering, intercropping, bunds and topsoil mulching** and **discourages intensive irrigation and deep ploughing**.

Advantages of ZBNF

- **Input costs are near zero** as no fertilizers and pesticides are used.

- ZBNF farms were able to **withstand drought and flooding**.
- The planting of multiple crops and border crops on the same field provide **varied income and nutrient sources**.
- There is reduced usage of water and electricity, improved health of farmers, flourishing of local ecosystems and biodiversity and no toxic chemical residues in the environment.
- The inputs help **manage soil nutrition, fertility, pests and seeds**.
- The technology requires **less tilling** and completely rejects the use of inorganic fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

Is it effective?

- A limited 2017 study in Andhra Pradesh claimed a **sharp decline in input costs and improvement in yields**. However, reports also suggest that **many farmers have reverted to conventional farming after seeing their ZBNF returns drop after a few years**, in turn raising doubts about the method's efficacy in increasing farmers' incomes.
- ZBNF critics, including some experts within the central policy and planning think tank NITI Aayog, note that **India needed the Green Revolution in order to become self-sufficient and ensure food security**.
- They **warn against a wholesale move away from that model without sufficient proof that yields will not be affected**. **Sikkim**, which has seen some decline in yields following a conversion to organic farming, is used as a cautionary tale regarding the pitfalls of abandoning chemical fertilizers.

Why in News?

- Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) is back on top of the Government's agricultural agenda, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently calling for the method to become a mass movement.
- The Centre has sanctioned support for converting four lakh additional hectares of crop land in eight States to using ZBNF techniques this year. This is meant to provide a showcase for their benefits.

2) Reintroduced Gharials thriving in Beas Reserve

About Gharials

- Gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*), sometimes called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts. It is one of the most endangered **freshwater crocodile species**.
- Gharials exhibit **sexual dimorphism** — or differences in characteristics between males and females of the same species — in both size and appearance which are absent in other crocodile species.
- Adult males develop a **bulbous growth** at the tip of their snout, called a "**ghara**" after the Indian pot it resembles. The ghara has several functions. It partially covers the crocodile's nostrils and acts as a vocal resonator, creating a loud, buzzing sound when the gharial vocalizes. It is also a visual signal for females, helping males attract a mate.
- Like tigers are the topmost predators in a forest, **gharials are the topmost predators in a river** as they balance the riverine food chain.



Threats

- **Protection Status:** IUCN Red List: **Critically Endangered**; CITES: **Appendix I**; Wildlife Protection Act (1972): **Schedule I**.
- Gharial populations have declined as much as 98 percent since the 1940s due to human activities like **hunting for traditional medicine and dam-making**.

Distribution

- Historically, gharial were found in the river system of India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh and southern part of Bhutan and Nepal.

- Today, their major population occurs in **three tributaries of the Ganga River:** the Chambal and the Girwa Rivers in **India** and the **Rapti-Narayani River in Nepal**. The **Gharial reserves** of India are located in three States – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

What's the news?

- Joint field surveys conducted by **Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation of Punjab and WWF-India** indicate the successful reintroduction of gharials in the Beas Conservation Reserve.
- Currently, dispersal of gharials is widespread in the Beas Conservation Reserve and around 40-50% of the released gharials have adapted to the Reserve.

News in detail

- The **gharial reintroduction in the Beas Conservation Reserve** is an ambitious programme of the **Punjab government**.
- The reptiles were commonly sighted in the Beas River till the 1960s but later became **extinct**.
- In the **first phase** of the reintroduction project, 47 gharials were released in 2017-2018 in the river in **Amritsar and Tarn Taran districts**. Later, 23 gharials were released in February 2021 on an island near **Seelampur and Tahli Forest in district Hoshiarpur** and another set of 24 gharials was released near the **Kulla Fatta forests in the reserve in Hoshiarpur district**.
- As habitat is conducive for egg-laying and hatching, **Regular patrolling and monitoring** of the reserve by forming a **gharial task force**, rapid rescue unit and anti-poaching group is being undertaken.
- The monitoring teams have also been **raising awareness** of the farmers and riparian communities working in the close vicinity of the Beas River.
- Experts point out that **change in the hydrology due to construction of dams and barrages**, significantly reduced water flow, rapid land-use change of floodplains and **rampant**

overfishing led slowly into the extinction of the gharial from the Beas.

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ECONOMY

1) World Inequality Report 2022

What's in the news?

- Paris-based **World Inequality Lab**, a global research initiative, has released its **World Inequality Report 2022**.
- The report covered 180 countries between 1991 to 2019.

Highlights of the Report

Contemporary income and wealth inequalities

- The richest 10% of the global population currently takes 52% of global income, whereas the poorest half of the population earns 8% of it.
- While inequality has increased within most countries, over the past two decades, global inequalities between countries have declined. The gap between the average incomes of the richest 10% of countries and the average incomes of the poorest 50% of countries

dropped from around 50x to a little less than 40x.

- At the same time, **inequalities increased significantly within countries**. The gap between the average incomes of the top 10% and the bottom 50% of individuals within countries has almost doubled, from 8.5x to 15x. Despite economic catch-up and strong growth in the emerging countries, the **world remains particularly unequal today**.

Scenario in India

- The report pegs **India to be among the most unequal countries in the world**. While the bottom half of the population in India earns Rs 53,610, the top 10% earns twenty times more at Rs 11,66,520.
- While the **top 10% and top 1% hold respectively 57% and 22% of total national income**, the **share of the bottom 50% has gone down to 13%**. India stands out as a poor and very unequal country, with an affluent elite.



Rise of private wealth

- There has been a **rise of private wealth in emerging countries such as China and India**. Large emerging economies such as China and India experienced faster increases in private wealth than wealthy countries after they transitioned away from communism (in China and

Russia) or from a highly regulated economic system (in India).

- Over the past 40 years, **countries have become significantly richer, but their governments have become significantly poorer**. The share of wealth held by public actors is close to zero or negative in rich countries, meaning that the totality of wealth is in private hands.

- This trend has been magnified by the Covid crisis, during which governments borrowed the equivalent of 10-20% of GDP, essentially from the private sector. The currently low wealth of governments has **important implications for state capacities to tackle inequality in the future, as well as the key challenges of the 21st century** such as climate change.

Poor share of women in labour income

- **Women's share of total incomes from work (labour income) stands at less than 35% presently.** The female share of the total labour income is the national aggregate labour income earned by women relative to the total aggregate of labour income within a country. In a country with **perfect equality between women and men, the female labour income share would be 50%.**
- **Female labour income in India of 18.3% is lower than the average for Asia, which was at 27% in 2019.** It denotes that men in India capture 82% of labour income, while women earn just 18%.
- Eastern Europe has the highest female labour income shares, with the average female share near 41%.

2) Cabinet approves ₹76,000-crore push for semiconductor makers

What's in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a ₹76,000 crore scheme to **boost semiconductor and display manufacturing** in the country.

- The comprehensive programme is aimed at **making India a global hub of electronic system design and manufacturing.**
- The scheme would provide **fiscal support of up to 50% of the project cost** for setting up semiconductor and display fabrication units. In addition, the Centre would work with the States to set up **high-tech clusters with the necessary infrastructure** such as land and semiconductor-grade water.

'India Semiconductor Mission'

- Under the programme, in order to drive the long-term strategies for developing a sustainable semiconductors and display ecosystem, a specialised and independent **'India Semiconductor Mission'** will be set up.
- The India Semiconductor Mission will be led by global experts in the semiconductor and display industry. It will act as the **nodal agency for efficient and smooth implementation** of the schemes on semiconductors and display ecosystem.
- **Electronics manufacturing** in the country had increased to \$75 billion over the past seven years and was expected to reach \$300 billion in the next six years. The entire programme would lead to 35,000 high-quality direct jobs and 1 lakh indirect employment.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) Bhutan announces its highest civilian award to PM Modi

What's in the news?

- Bhutan has announced that it will confer its highest civilian award **Ngadag Pel gi Khorlo or The Order of The Druk Gyaplo to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**
- Many countries have honoured Prime Minister Narendra Modi with their highest civilian awards. Likewise, many non-governmental organisations and foundations have also conferred prestigious awards on him.
- In 2016, he received the **highest civilian awards from Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.**
- In 2018, he was conferred the **highest honour of Palestine.** In 2019, the **United**

Arab Emirates honoured the Indian Prime Minister with the **Order of Zyed Award.** In the same year, **Russia, Bahrain and the Maldives** also conferred Mr Modi with their respective highest civilian awards.

- In 2020, Mr Modi received the prestigious **Legion of Merit** from the **United States of America.** Other prestigious awards given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at international forums include the **Seoul Peace Prize** and **Champions of the Earth Award** which is United Nation's highest environmental honour.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) A Gender-sensitive approach towards eradicating TB

About Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by **bacteria Mycobacterium tuberculosis** which most often affect the **lungs**.
- It is a **contagious** disease which spreads from person to person through the air.
- When a person develops active TB disease, the symptoms such as cough, fever, night sweats, or weight loss may be mild for many months.
- People with active TB can infect 5–15 other people through close contact over the course of a year.
- It is **curable and preventable**.

Symptoms

- **Common symptoms of active lung TB are**
 - a) Cough with sputum and blood at times
 - b) Chest pains
 - c) Weakness
 - d) Weight loss
 - e) Fever and
 - f) Night sweats.

Why in news?

- Vice-president Venkaiah Naidu recently called for a **gender-sensitive approach to eradicate TB**.

News in detail

- TB affects over **10 lakh women and girls and more than 3 lakh children** every year in our country.
- The Vice-president emphasised that **while the prevalence of TB is higher among men, it can have a disproportionately higher impact on women as women are more susceptible because adequate priority is not given to their health and nutrition**.
- TB is responsible for more deaths among women of reproductive age than all causes of maternal mortality combined.
- There are a large number of **unreported and untreated cases of TB amongst women** as they face the misery of abandonment and violence if found to have TB.
- Eg: Only 18 lakh of the 26 lakh estimated new TB cases in 2020 were reported to

the TB programme signifying a wide gap of 8 lakh because of the stigma attached to the disease.

- He also underlined that **ensuring nutrition to women and children will be key in the fight against TB**.
- It is vital to ensure women and children not only have **equitable access to healthcare** but also actively seek and complete appropriate TB regimes in order to achieve the target of **eradicating TB by 2025**.

2) 5G Technology

What is 5G?

- **5G is the 5th generation mobile network**. It is a new global wireless standard after 1G, 2G, 3G, and 4G networks.
- 5G enables a new kind of network that is designed to connect virtually everyone and everything together including machines, objects, and devices.
- 5G wireless technology is meant to **deliver higher multi-Gbps peak data speeds, ultra low latency (the delay between the sending and receiving information)**, more reliability, massive network capacity, increased availability, and a more uniform user experience to more users.
- **Higher performance and improved efficiency** empower new user experiences and connect new industries.

How can 5G affect disrupt airlines?

- American **wireless communications companies** are getting ready in early 2022 to begin transmission in the “**C-Band**”, which is **a range that is close to the one used by certain aircraft equipment**. This will be in addition to other frequencies already in use for 5G.
- Threat of **potential radar altimeter interference” from 5G cellular** in the 3700 MHz-3800 MHz frequency, or the C-band is **close to the 4200 MHz-4400 MHz range used by aircraft radio altimeters**.
- Operations by aircraft including large jets could be **limited or prohibited from using certain landing and navigation**

systems in places where there is scope for **potential interference from new 5G cellular networks**. The restrictions could be **severe for smaller aircraft and helicopters**. Overall, these **could result in flight cancellations, delays or diversions** where these towers are.

How does it happen?

- **Aircraft** have **two types of altimeters** — **pressure altimeter and radio altimeter**. The **pressure altimeter** displays the **altitude of the aircraft in relation to mean sea level** and uses the ambient pressure to measure the altitude.
- Most **commercial aircraft have two radio altimeters**, with the indication coming up on the primary flight display. The antennas are placed in the fuselage of the aircraft.
- The **radio altimeter** measures height (and not altitude) of the aircraft above the surface immediately below the plane. For this purpose, it **transmits a radio signal directly below**.
- While older systems calculated height based on the time between transmission and reception of the reflected signal, the more modern radio altimeters use more refined techniques such as measuring the phase shift of the reflected signal.
- **If both radio altimeters are not available**, the **pilot** would be compelled to do a **manual approach**.
- The **non-availability of the radio altimeter** can be **crucial** during **approach and landing for most modern aircraft** and **any disturbance to internal radio altimeter readings** caused by 5G or other equipment transmitting in frequency bands close to it can result in **disastrous effects on crucial systems during approach/landing**.

Effects of interference

- Entire **operations** will require **increased visibility and obstacle clearance limit requirements**. For airports and passengers, this will result in **additional flight times and also more fuel requirement for each flight** as the separation between flights will increase that will have a **domino effect of flight delays**. The effect could be compounded

in areas that experience adverse weather conditions.

- **Helicopter** flying in all areas within the vicinity of a city or town will become impossible unless they revert to manual flights
- Majority of **passengers do not switch off cell phones**. This could pose extreme danger when flying in the vicinity of major airports. **Even if 5G towers are prohibited** within a certain radius, **any passenger switching on and using the (5G) phone** while the aircraft is at lower altitudes and hovering due to delays, **can be in danger**.
- When aircraft are performing reduced-visibility instrument approaches, a **false input to the autopilot system** due to erroneous signals **can result in a crash**.

Why in News?

- Major U.S. air carriers warned that plans by wireless carriers to use spectrum for 5G wireless services could disrupt airline flights.

Related information

Features of 5G

- **5G** is the **most recent update** to the long-term evolution (LTE) mobile broadband networks.
- **Internet speed:** Internet speeds in the 5G high-band spectrum have been tested to reach as high as 20 Gbps (gigabits per second), compared to the internet data speed in 4G, which was recorded at 1 Gbps. The peak data rate for a 5G network should be 20 Gb/s for the downlink and 10 Gb/s for the uplink.
- **Millimeter wave spectrum:** Because the **frequency is so high**, it **encounters less interference from adjacent signals**, 5G networks will operate in the millimetre wave spectrum (30-300 GHz), which has the benefit of **transferring massive volumes of data at extremely fast speeds**.
- 5G bands: 5G **primarily operates in three bands, namely the low, mid, and high frequency** spectrums, each of which has its own set of applications and restrictions.
 - **Low band spectrum:** It has shown **significant potential in terms of internet coverage and speed, however**

the **maximum speed is restricted** to 100 Mbps (Megabits per second).

- **Mid-band spectrum:** It has greater speeds than low band but has restrictions in terms of coverage area and signal penetration.
- **High-band spectrum:** The **fastest** of the three bands, but **with highly restricted coverage and signal penetration power.**

Uses of 5g

- For **India, 5G networks might increase the accessibility of services such as mobile banking and healthcare**, as well as enable an exponential increase in the number of possibilities for **jobless or underemployed individuals** to engage in work.
- **High-Speed Technology:** 5G is a fifth-generation cellular technology that will **boost download and upload speeds over a mobile network.** Internet speeds in the 5G high-band spectrum have been measured to reach as high as 20 Gbps (gigabits per second), compared to the greatest internet data speed in 4G, which was recorded at 1 Gbps. 5G will also lower latency, or the time it takes for a network to respond.
- **Machine-to-Machine Interaction:** 5G will be the first technology to enable machine-to-machine communication, which will serve as the foundation for the Internet of Things (**IoT**). 5G might be a significant facilitator of the fourth industrial revolution when combined with IoT, cloud, big data, AI, and edge computing.

- **Economic Benefits:** 5G is estimated to generate a **cumulative economic effect of USD1 trillion in India by 2035.** It would provide a **significant economic boost to India** by increasing **communication between machines and diverse industries**, resulting in **enhanced efficiency.** Production will also expand, resulting in massive income collections.
- **Collaborative Network Implementation:** For the first time, 5G will **bring together the business and technical sectors** for network deployment. Previously, telecoms would negotiate internally and construct networks, but today, enterprises, technology firms, and cyber specialists would collaborate to deploy networks.

Related policies

- According to **India's National Digital Communications Policy 2018**, the convergence of a **cluster of revolutionary technologies, including 5G, the cloud, Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics**, along with a growing start-up community, promise to accelerate and deepen India's digital engagement, opening up a new horizon of opportunities.
- It intends to achieve 100 percent teledensity, high-speed internet roads, and electronic delivery of citizen-centric services.

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DEFENCE

1) Pinaka Rocket

About

- Pinaka is a **multi barrel rocket launch (MBRL) system** used by the Indian Army.
- It was **developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- It is an **all-weather, indirect fire, free flight artillery rocket system**.
- It provides a unique capability to accurately deliver devastatingly lethal and responsive fire against a variety of area targets such as exposed enemy troops, armored and soft skin vehicles, communication centers, air terminal complexes, fuel and ammunition dumps.
- The Pinaka weapon system consists of Rocket, Multi Barrel Rocket launcher, Battery Command Post, Loader cum Replenishment Vehicle, Replenishment Vehicle and Digicora MET Radar.

Why in News?

- **DRDO** has successfully tested Pinaka Extended Range (ER) multi-barrel rocket launcher system, Area Denial Munitions (ADM) and indigenously developed fuses have been carried out at various test ranges.
- The **Pinaka-ER is the upgraded version** of the earlier version which has been in service with the Army for the last decade.
- The **new Pinaka ER** gives it a **range of around 70 km**, over the 45 km existing range of the missile

2) Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of torpedo (SMART) system

Why in News?

- A **supersonic missile-assisted torpedo system** developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) was successfully launched from the Wheeler Island, Odisha.

About the system

- The system is a next generation **missile-based standoff torpedo delivery system**.

- The system has been **designed to enhance anti-submarine warfare capability** far beyond the **conventional range of the torpedo**
- This canister-based missile system consists of advanced technologies - **two-stage solid propulsion, electro-mechanical actuators and precision inertial navigation**. The missile is launched from ground mobile launcher and it can cover a range of distances.

Why is it significant?

- **Torpedoes are self-propelled weapons** that travel underwater to hit a target, but their **range is limited**.
- This **SMART system** consists of a **mechanism that launches the torpedo from a supersonic missile system with modifications** that **extend the torpedo's range** considerably beyond its own.
- **SMART is a game-changing** anti-submarine warfare technology demonstration.
- The development of India's anti-submarine warfare capability is **critical in view of China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean region**.
- Submarines, specialised anti-submarine ships, aviation assets, and cutting-edge surveillance and detection techniques are among the assets of such warfare.

3) India's Defence Exports

Why in News?

- **India's defence exports have increased from ₹1,521 crore in 2016-17 to ₹8,434.84 crore in 2020-21**. The figure stood at ₹10,745 crore in 2018-19.
- The **Government** has set an ambitious target to **achieve exports of about ₹35,000 crore** (\$5 billion) in aerospace and defence goods and services **by 2025**.

The changing numbers

- According to the latest **report** of the Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), three Indian companies figure among the top 100 defence companies in the 2020 rankings — Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Ordnance

Factory Board and Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL).

- Their aggregated **arms sales of \$6.5 billion** were **1.7% higher in 2020** than in 2019 and accounted for 1.2% of the top 100 total.
- There was an **overall drop in India's arms imports between 2011-15 and 2016-20**, according to another **SIPRI report of 2020** and while India remained among the **top importers**, it was also included in the **Top 25 defence exporters**.
- **Changing geopolitical reality** meant that many **smaller nations were now worried about security** and would look **towards India as it had the strength of low-cost, high-quality production**.

Platforms that are considered for the sale

- The Defence Minister announced that India was ready to supply different types of missile systems, LCA/helicopters, multi-purpose light transport aircraft, warships and patrol vessels, artillery gun systems, tanks, radars, military vehicles, electronic warfare systems and other weapons systems to Indian Ocean Region (IOR) nations.
- **Assistance in capacity building and capability enhancement** has emerged as a major theme in discussions with **Indian Ocean littoral states** with the Navy taking the lead in this area.
- **Vietnam** is procuring 12 Fast Attack Craft under a \$100 million **credit line** announced by India and discussions are continuing to identify systems under the second **line of credit** of \$500 million. Vietnam is also interested in Advanced Light Helicopters and Akash surface-to-air missiles.
 - *To read about Akash Missile:* <https://officerspulse.com/akash-missile/>
 - *To read about ALH:* <https://officerspulse.com/indian-coast-guard-icg/>
- HAL has pitched its helicopters and the **Tejas LCA to several Southeast Asian and West Asian nations** and is in the race to supply the **sLCA to Malaysia**.
 - *To read about LCA-* <https://officerspulse.com/lca-mk2/>

- Sale of **BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles** are at an advanced stage with some Southeast Asian nations.

Measures to improve defence exports

- **Measures** announced to boost exports include **simplified defence industrial licensing, relaxation of export controls and grant of no-objection certificates**.
- **Specific incentives** were introduced under the foreign trade policy and the Ministry of External Affairs has facilitated **Lines of Credit for countries to import defence products**.
- In addition, **defence attaches** in Indian missions abroad have been empowered to promote defence exports.
- The Defence Ministry has also issued a **draft Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy 2020**.
 - *Read about it at:* <https://officerspulse.com/draft-defence-production-and-export-promotion-policy-2020/>
- On the **domestic front**, to **boost indigenous manufacturing**, the Government had issued **two "positive indigenisation lists"** consisting of 209 items that cannot be imported and can only be procured from domestic industry.
- In addition, a percentage of the capital outlay of the defence budget has been reserved for **procurement from domestic industry**. For the year 2021-22, about 63% of the capital outlay or about ₹70,221 crore will be done from domestic defence industry

4) Rustom 2 UAV

Why in News?

- The **indigenous Rustom 2- Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)** development programme by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has crossed a milestone by reaching an altitude of 25,000 feet and an endurance of 10 hours

About Rustom 2

- **Rustom 2** is part of the **Rustom line of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)** that includes Rustom-I, Rustom-H and Rustom-C.

- The drone was **developed** for use **by all three services of the Indian armed forces**, primarily for **intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) operations**.
- The Drone was developed to match the specifications of the Israeli unmanned aerial vehicle Heron.
- High endurance UAVs are a **priority requirement for the armed forces** especially in the **standoff with China in Eastern Ladakh**. The armed forces rely

heavily on the Israeli Searcher and Heron drones and need more such UAVs.

- Once the capabilities are demonstrated, it should be ready to be handed to the Services. A **programme** for a more capable **High Altitude Long Range (HALE) UAV is also in the works**.

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ART AND CULTURE

1) Kashi Vishwanath temple complex

About the temple

- Kashi Vishwanath Temple is **one of the most famous temples in Varanasi**, also known as the **Golden temple dedicated to Lord Shiva**.
- It was **constructed in the year 1780 by the Maratha monarch, Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore**.
- The temple stands on the western bank of the holy river Ganga, and is **one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest of Shiva temples**.
- The main deity is known by the name **Vishvanatha or Vishveshvara** meaning **Ruler of The Universe**.

Why in News?

- The 400-metre-long Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi connecting the ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva to the banks of the Ganges was inaugurated by Prime Minister

Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor

- The project entails a **complete overhaul of the sacred shrine and its surroundings**. This is the **first major renovation since the Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore rebuilt the temple and surrounding region in 1780 AD**.
- The Kashi Vishwanath temple lacked direct access to the Ganga, and a 20-foot-wide corridor was envisaged to connect Lalita Ghat on the holy river to Mandir Chowk on the temple premises.
- **Pilgrims and travellers will view a freshly erected museum exhibiting Varanasi's ancient history and culture along the corridor**.

Significance

- The **improvement of the infrastructure** in Varanasi is expected to give a **boost to tourism** in the holy city as well as in the region, **including the Buddhist pilgrimage site of Sarnath**.
- **Ganga cruises** are planned for tourists, **road infrastructure has been upgraded**.
- **LED screens will display information for tourists**, including on the history, architecture, and art of Kashi. The famous **Ganga Aarti and the aarti at the Kashi Vishwanath temple** will be shown on the screens throughout the city.
- During demolition of the buildings, more than 40 **'lost' temples** like the Gangeshwar Mahadev temple, the Manokameshwar Mahadev temple, the Jauvinayak temple, and the Shri Kumbha Mahadev temple **were discovered**.
- A gallery has been devoted to showcase some of the excavated remains at the National Museum in New Delhi, and to run a narrative on their histories on screens alongside.
- In Varanasi, **"smart signages"** have been erected to provide information on the cultural importance of heritage sites and the city's 84 ghats, which are known for their antiquity and **architectural significance**.

2) Durga Pooja Festival

Why in News:

- UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the **Intangible Cultural Heritage** has added **"Durga Puja in Kolkata"** on the **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.

About the festival



- **Durga Puja** is a five-day event that begins on the fifth night of the nine-day **Navratri festival** and **concludes on Dashami, the tenth day**.
- At this time, people worship and invoke **Goddess Durga, also known as Shakti**.
- It is **Asia's first festival to be designated as a UNESCO ICH of Humanity**.
- The event **includes folk music, culinary, craft, and performing arts traditions**.
- It recognises the festival's contribution to sustaining and safeguarding a plethora of traditional arts and crafts, community well-being and economic empowerment, and energising creativity.
- The total **economic worth** of the creative activities involved in **Durga Puja festival** is about **₹32,377 crore** and the festival contributes **2.58% of West Bengal's GDP**, reveals a study carried out by the British Council.

About UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage

- The **list was created in 2008**, when the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage went into force.
- This **list includes intangible heritage aspects that illustrate the richness of cultural heritage and raise awareness about its significance**.

- According to UNESCO, cultural heritage **does not end at monuments and collections of objects**. It **includes traditions or living expressions** inherited from our ancestors and passed down to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practises, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practises concerning nature and the universe, or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.
- Intangible cultural heritage, according to UNESCO, is “traditional, contemporary and living at the same time”, “inclusive”, “representative”, and “community-based”. It is “an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalisation” — and “an understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life”.

Related initiative in India

- India's **Ministry of Culture** has also published a **draft National List of India's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**.
- The National ICH List is an attempt to acknowledge the diversity of Indian culture as it is embodied in intangible heritage.

- This effort is also part of the **Ministry of Culture's Vision 2024**.

Intangible Cultural Heritage from India

- With the inclusion of Durga Puja, the number of elements in the **list of Intangible Cultural Heritage from India has increased to 14**.
- The latest inclusion in the list prior to the Durga Puja is the Kumbh Mela, the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, which was inscribed in 2017. Yoga was included in 2016.
- Besides **Durga Puja in Kolkata (2021)**, the India list has: **Kumbh Mela (2017)**; **Nowruz (2016)**; **traditional brass and copper utensil-making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab (2014)**; **Sankirtana of Manipur (2013)**; **Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012)**; **Chhau dance, Kalbelia dance of Rajasthan, and Mudi yettu of Kerala (2010)**; **Ramman festival of Garhwal (2009)**; and **Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre, Ramlila, and Vedic chanting (2008)**.

3) Bangladesh Liberation War

Why in News:

- President Ram Nath Kovind participated in the celebration to mark the golden jubilee of independence of Bangladesh and victory in the Bangladeshi Liberation War.

Brief summary of the movement

- It began with the **declaration of Independence by the Mukti Bahini** (Freedom Fighters) led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 26, 1971.
- Since India's partition into India and Pakistan (including present-day Bangladesh) in 1947, **residents of East Pakistan have felt that forces in West Pakistan were undermining their culture and status**.
- **The Language Movement** began in **1948** with the goal of asserting the rights of Pakistan's Bengali-speaking population as well as achieving equal status for Bengali with Urdu, which was declared as Pakistan's federal language on its own.
- There were also **economic disparities between the two sides**. The western

side received a larger share of the common budget. **West Pakistan dominated the country's industry and trade, while East Pakistan was the primary provider of raw materials**, creating an uneven trading arrangement. In more ways than one, West Pakistan deprived and coerced East Pakistan.

- **Discrimination was so severe** that even the smallest disagreement was labelled as an enemy of Pakistan or Islam. **Persecutory measures**, arrests, and incarceration were the rule of the day.
- West Pakistan had a 32% greater per capita income than East Pakistan in 1959-60. which increased to 81 percent by 1969-70. West Pakistan has constantly benefited from investment initiatives, notably in **educational facilities**.
- A catastrophic **cyclone named "Bhola"** struck East Pakistan in 1970, killing 300,000 to 500,000 people. The West Pakistan government's lacklustre response increased tensions.
- **Mujibur Rahman's Awami League won a clear majority** in Pakistan's general elections in 1970. However, the Pakistani military (which had only about 5% Bengali officers) was opposed to him becoming the country's supremo.
- **Yahya Khan's** military government was **unwilling to cede power to Mujibur Rahman**.
- On the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistani army launched the now-infamous **'Operation Searchlight,' killing students, intellectuals, and civilians in Bangladesh**.
- **Mujibur Rahman declared the country's independence on March 26**, after it became clear that the West Pakistan authorities would not grant him legitimate power.
- Following this, a **guerrilla war** erupted between the Pakistani army and their collaborators known as Razakars, as well as the Bangladeshi liberation forces, known as the **'Mukti Bahini.'**
- When **Pakistani forces began attacking civilians in Bangladesh**, millions of people fled to India, particularly West Bengal and Assam.
- **Indian forces assisted** by providing arms and training to **Mukti Bahini**

soldiers. India officially entered combat on December 3, 1971, when Pakistan attacked Indian Air Force bases.

- **Operation Trident** -Offensive operation launched by the Indian Navy on Pakistan's port city of Karachi during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.
- **Operation Meghna Heli Bridge** – Aerial operation of Indian and Bangladeshi allied forces during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.
- **Pakistan surrendered on December 16, 1971.** India won the war, and Bangladesh gained independence. The **signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty in August 1971** was instrumental in this.
- In order to ensure a smooth transition, India and Pakistan signed the **Simla Agreement in 1972.** In exchange for the **release of Pakistani POWs,** Pakistan was obliged to recognise **Bangladesh's independence.** All prisoners of war in India were treated exactly in accordance with the **Geneva Convention, Rule 1925.**
- Every year on **16 December Vijay Diwas** is observed to mark India's victory in the 1971 war on Pakistan.

Significance

- India was **able to break up the then undivided Pakistan**(into present day Pakistan and Bangladesh) and thus **eliminated the threat of a two-front war**(in the western and eastern border) in any future confrontation(as Bangladesh welcomed India's support for its independence). Although the eastern front remained largely inactive since 1965, it tied down India's substantial military resources that could have been deployed to greater effect in the **western theatre(Present day Pakistan).**

- **Negating the Communal Threat:** By July-August 1971, 90% of the migrants were Hindus clustered in West Bengal border regions with strong Muslim populations. As a result, if India did not move immediately to assure their return, there was a real risk of communal bloodshed.
- The triumph **established India's considerably greater influence in international affairs.**
- Many countries throughout the world, including the United States, recognised that the balance of power in South Asia had moved to India.
- The 1971 war **demonstrated the strength of Indian secularism,** with Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs all standing together in the face of adversity.

Impact

- **Large-scale migration of Bangladeshis to India to flee persecution** created massive social, political, administrative, and financial challenges for India, which persist to this day.
- **Massive political unrest** against Bangladeshi immigrants caused a major problem in the **North East** regions of Assam and Tripura.
- Apart from the **drain of resources caused by the war and rehabilitation efforts,** various **sanctions** were imposed on India by nations such as the United States, the war **strengthened India's relationship with the Soviet Union (India signed a 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation with the Soviet Union)**

PIB ANALYSIS

1) Udyam Sakhi portal

About the Portal

- Udyam Sakhi portal (<http://udyamsakhi.msme.gov.in/>) was launched in 2018 to provide information regarding financial schemes, policies and programmes of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to existing/prospective women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector.
- The portal is a network for nurturing entrepreneurship and creating business models for low cost products and services in order to empower women and make them self-reliant and self-sufficient.
- The portal provides assistance through its platform for entrepreneurship learning tools, incubation facility, training programs for fundraising, providing mentors, one-on-one investor meet, market survey facility and technical assistance.

Why in News?

- The Ministry for MSME announced that a total of 2952 women have so far benefitted from the Udyam Sakhi portal.

2) National Action Plan on Climate Change

About NAPCC

- The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) was formally launched in 2008.
- The NAPCC identifies measures that promote development objectives while also yielding co-benefits for addressing climate change effectively.
- There are **eight "National Missions"** which form the core of the National action plan. They focus on promoting understanding of climate change, adaptation and mitigation, energy efficiency and natural resource conservation.

Missions under the NAPCC

1. National Solar Mission

- This initiative was started to promote the use of solar power.

- The Mission has set the ambitious target of deploying **100 GW** of grid connected solar power by 2022. It is under the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**.

2. National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency

- The initiative was undertaken to promote the market for energy efficiency by fostering innovative policies and effective market instruments.
- Implementation agencies of the Mission- **BEE - Bureau of Energy Efficiency & EESL - Energy Efficiency Services Limited**.

3. National Mission on Sustainable Habitat

- It aims to make cities sustainable through improvements in energy efficiency in buildings, management of solid waste and shift to public transport.
- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** backs the mission.

4. National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem

- Aimed at protecting the Himalayas, it has mapped institutes and civil society organisations working on the Himalayan ecology for ease of coordination between governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- It is the **only area-specific mission** under the NAPCC.

5. National Mission for a Green India

- It aims at protecting, restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.
- It is driven by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

6. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture

- It has been formulated for enhancing agricultural productivity especially in rain-fed areas focusing on integrated farming, water use efficiency, soil health management and synergizing resource conservation.

7. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change

- The mission seeks to build a dynamic and vibrant knowledge system that informs and supports national policy and action for responding effectively to climate change challenges, while not compromising on the nation's growth goals.
- The **Ministry of Science and Technology** drives the mission.

8. National Water Mission

- The main objective of NWM is conservation of water, minimizing wastage and ensuring its more equitable distribution both across and within states through integrated water resources development and management.
- At present, it is driven by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has provided details of fund released and fund utilisation under the National Mission for a Green India under the National Action Plan on Climate Change in the Parliament.

3) Setu Bharatam scheme

About the Scheme

- The Setu Bharatam scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016. It was an initiative to **make all national highways free of various railway crossings**.
- The scheme was launched with the **focus towards the importance of road safety**. The initiative aims at developing stronger infrastructure with proper planning and implementation.
- This project aims to replace railway crossings on National Highways by Road

over Bridges (ROBs) /Road Under Bridges (RUBs).

Why in News?

- Administrative approval and financial sanction for construction of 123 RoBs/RuBs have been accorded under Setu Bharatam Programme.

4) 'LogiXtics' Hackathon

What's in the news?

- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has launched the Unified Logistics Interface Platform's (ULIP) Hackathon – 'LogiXtics' in order to **crowdsource more ideas which will benefit the logistics industry**.
- ULIP is designed to enhance efficiency and reduce logistics cost in India by creating a transparent platform that can provide real time information to all stakeholders and remove all asymmetry information.
- The ULIP Hackathon – LogiXtics is organised by **NITI Aayog and Atal Innovation Mission** and supported by **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) and NICDC Logistics Data Bank Services Limited (NLDSL)**.
- ULIP is being developed as a technology platform in the logistics sector which will provide real time information to all stakeholders and will converge visibility of multi-modal transport across the existing systems of various Ministries/Departments working in silos.

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News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) India registers highest-ever annual FDI inflow

What's in the news?

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that **India has registered the highest ever annual Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow of 81.97 billion dollar in 2020-21.**
- FDI inflows in the last seven financial years is over 440 billion dollars, which is nearly 58 percent of the total FDI inflow in the last 21 financial years.
- Top five countries from where FDI Equity Inflows were received during 2014 to 2021 are **Singapore, Mauritius, USA, Netherlands and Japan.**
- **Computer Software and Hardware sector** attracted the largest share of FDI inflows, followed by **Service, Trading and Telecommunications.**

2) Centre approves to set up 100 Sainik Schools

About Sainik Schools

- Sainik Schools are residential schools for boys, providing **Public School Education with Military bias.**

- The schools are affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi and are supported by Central and State funding.
- The scheme to establish Sainik Schools was introduced in 1961 with the primary aim of preparing boys academically, physically and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy.
- They are established and managed by **Sainik Schools Society under the Ministry of Defence.**

Why in News?

- The Government has approved a scheme to set up 100 Sainik Schools in partnership with NGOs, Private Schools and the State governments.
- The aims and objectives of the Scheme is to provide an educational and training environment on the pattern of training provided in existing Sainik Schools.
- It aims to extend the benefits of a system that combines academic rigour with a degree of discipline and regimentation.

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THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) The National Monetisation Pipeline is hardly the panacea for growth in India

Context

- The National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) envisages an aggregate monetisation potential of ₹6-lakh crore through the **leasing of core assets of the Central government** in various sectors **over a four-year period** (FY2022 to FY2025).
- The policy makers need to **introspect the decline of profit-making government assets** in the backdrop of the Government contemplating reinvesting the funds received to create fresh assets, post the NMP exercise.

About NMP

- According to NITI Aayog, the strategic objective of the asset monetisation programme is to **unlock the value of investments in public sector assets by tapping private sector capital** and efficiencies.
- The NMP policy advocates unlocking idle capital from non-strategic/underperforming government owned assets and reinvesting the funds, thus received, into new infrastructure projects and augmentation of assets such as greenfield infrastructure creation.
- This is the first-of-its-kind initiative that will **boost the economy, generate better employment opportunities, and drive the competitiveness** of the Indian economy.

What is the issue?

- As India needs to **invest about \$1.5 trillion on infrastructure development in order to aspire to become a \$5 trillion economy by the year 2024-25**, according to the **Economic Survey 2019-20**, public enterprises should be in focus.

Reasons for PSU decline

- The primary reasons for the failure of public sector enterprises are
 - **Cost overruns**
 - In some cases, project completion time is exceeded, leading to elevated project cost so much so that either

the project itself becomes unviable at the time of its launching or delays its break even point.

- Optimum input-output ratio is rarely observed in a majority of government infrastructure projects leading to their **overcapitalisation**.
- A **reluctance to implement labour reforms**
- A **lack of inter-ministerial/departmental coordination**
- **Poor decision-making**
- **Ineffective governance and excessive government control**

Government measures

- **“Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti National Master Plan” for multi-modal connectivity** was recently launched by the Prime Minister with an aim ‘to **synchronise the operations of different departments of 16 Ministries** including railways and roadways for seamless planning and coordinated execution of infrastructure projects in a timely manner’.
- It is essentially a digital platform for **information sharing** among different Ministries and departments at the Union and State levels.
- It also entails **analytical decision-making tools** to disseminate project-related information and prioritise key infrastructure projects.
- Also it fosters a **periodical review and monitoring** of the progress of cross-sectorial infrastructure projects through the GIS platform in order to intervene if there is a need.

Way forward

- As enunciated in the Economic Survey 2020-21 to strengthen public sector businesses it is needed to
 - **Completely revamp their corporate governance structure** in order to **enhance operational autonomy** augmented with strong governance practices including listing on stock exchange for

greater transparency and accountability.

2) The stepping stones in the post-pandemic world

Context

- The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted lives and livelihoods across the world. Governments, global institutions, industry, academia and non-profit organisations around the world have joined hands to tackle the global challenge and help countries rebuild their economies.

Criticality of international cooperation

- The novel coronavirus pandemic has once again highlighted the criticality of international cooperation in combating current and future challenges.
- Key among these include **economic growth, building competitiveness of the investment climate, ensuring sustainable development paths and adapting to technology acceleration.**
- Global partnerships help in **building mutual trust** and understanding by agreeing upon common rules and standards and sharing of best practices.

Areas to look into

Sustainability of growth

- While the world economy is rebounding strongly, the **long-term sustainability of the growth process** needs to be strengthened.
- Exit from the massive stimulus packages itself may pose risks of economic and financial instability.
- The **issue of growing inequality of incomes** among countries as well as within countries must be addressed.
- Mechanisms for reviving growth in certain parts of the world should be coordinated effectively so as not to disrupt it in other parts of the world.

Global supply chains

- The pandemic severely disrupted global supply chains and set the global trade trajectory on a downward path.
- Even as the world emerges from the pandemic, facilitating medical supplies and essentials will continue to remain a top priority and for this, **supply chains will need to be kept flowing.**

- As the free flow of goods, services and capital will continue to play a dominant role in the global economic recovery process, collaborative efforts from countries across the world would be required in facilitating trade partnerships at both regional and multilateral levels to better protect consumers and producers.
- Cooperation on trade facilitation for enhancing open and transparent markets, technical assistance and reduction of complex process and arrangements must be promoted.

Increasing Competitiveness

- Competitiveness will be key in facilitating growth and inclusive development.
- New opportunities and avenues across potential high growth sectors such as manufacturing and start-ups must be leveraged.
- An ecosystem of entrepreneurship and innovation with targeted policies and interventions will contribute to enhancing productivity and generating employment.

Fill the technology gaps

- Certain structural changes are likely to become permanent in the future and this is especially true of the digital economy.
- The rise of telemedicine, remote work and e-learning, delivery services, etc. necessitates equitable adaptation to advanced technologies and tools, building robust infrastructure, and occupational transitions.
- **Skill development and worker training, investments in education and vocational training, and capacity building** would be some key areas of focus for filling technology gaps and nurturing new and existing talent.

Investment in innovation

- The convergence of the global scientific community for vaccine development and genome sequencing has set a new precedent in international cooperation.
- Global collaboration in areas including research and development and Industry 5.0 and investments in digital and corporate strategy can similarly become key drivers of industrial development.

Climate change

- International alliances and cooperation on building sustainable solutions, green technology, resource efficiency, sustainable finance, etc., must be promoted to fast-track meeting the sustainable development goals and for ensuring all-round development.

Conclusion

- In the post-pandemic world, it will be **critical for India to improve on its investment climate** and systematically **target its export capabilities** across sectors and regions.
- Ease of doing business and new free trade agreements with major markets will help it integrate closely with the world through trade and investment partnerships.
- India must **leverage international partnerships** for ensuring a robust and sustained economic growth path.

3) The WTO's challenge to MSP is another frontier to cross

Context

- This article tries to analyse if India can provide a **legal guarantee for MSP** without violating its international law obligations **enshrined in the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO)**.

Agreement of Agriculture and Types of subsidy

- The central objective of the AoA is to **cut trade-distorting domestic support** that WTO member countries provide to agriculture.
- In this regard, the domestic subsidies are divided into three categories:

Non-trade distorting

Green box

- Income support to farmers decoupled from production

Blue box

- Direct payments under production limiting programmes subject to certain conditions

Trade distorting

Amber box

- Price support provided in the form of procurement of crops at MSP is classified as a trade-distorting subsidy and falls under the 'amber box' measures, which are subject to certain limits.

- To measure 'amber box' support, WTO member countries are required to compute **Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)**.
- AMS is the total of **product-specific support** (price support to a particular crop) and **non-product-specific support** (fertilizer subsidy).

What is de minimis level?

- Under the AoA, developing countries such as **India are allowed to provide a de minimis level of product and non-product domestic subsidy**.
- This de minimis limit is **capped at 10%** of the total value of production of the product, in case of a product-specific subsidy; and at 10% of the total value of a country's agricultural production, in case of non-product subsidy.
- Subsidies breaching the de minimis cap are trade-distorting and hence they have to be accounted for in the AMS.

India overshooting the de minimis limit

Widening gap between ERP and MSP

- The procurement at MSP, after comparing it with the fixed external reference price (ERP) — an average price based on the **base years 1986-88** — has to be included in AMS.
- Since the fixed ERP has not been revised in the last several decades at the WTO, the difference between the MSP and fixed ERP has widened enormously due to inflation.
- According to the Centre for WTO Studies, India's ERP for rice, in 1986-88, was \$262.51/tonne and the MSP was less than this.
- However, India's applied administered price for rice in 2015-16 stood at \$323.06/tonne, much more than the 1986-88 ERP.
- Procuring all the 23 crops at MSP, as against the current practice of procuring largely rice and wheat, will result in India **breaching the de minimis limit** making it vulnerable to a legal challenge at the WTO.

Peace clause

- The AoA needs to be amended so that it provides adequate policy space to run an **MSP-backed food security programme**.

- **The peace clause forbids bringing legal challenges against price support-based procurement for food security purposes even if it breaches the limit on domestic support.**
- However, the peace clause is subject to several conditions.
 - For example, it can be availed by developing countries for the support provided to **traditional staple food crops** to pursue public stockholding programmes for food security (procuring food to provide free ration through the Public Distribution System).
 - The peace clause is applicable only for programmes that were existing as of the date of the decision and are consistent with other requirements.
 - Countries are also **under an obligation to notify the WTO** if their subsidies exceed the permissible level.
- For instance, earlier this year, India reported to the WTO that the subsidies were 13.6% of the total value of production as against the de minimis level of 10%.

What is the issue?

- India's procurement for rice and wheat, **even if it violates the de minimis limit,**

will enjoy legal immunity. However, India will not be able to employ the peace clause to defend procuring those crops that are not part of the food security programme (such as cotton, groundnut, sunflower seed).

- Even if the AoA is amended to exclude MSP-backed procurement for food security purposes from the AMS, procurement for other crops at prices higher than the fixed ERP would be considered trade-distorting and thus subject to the de minimis limit.
- Therefore, India needs to recalibrate its agricultural support programmes to make use of the flexibilities available in the AoA.

Way forward

- India can **move away from price-based support** in the form of MSP to **income-based support**, which will not be trade-distorting under the AoA provided the income support is not linked to production.
- Alternatively, one can **supplement price-based support** (keeping the de minimis limit in mind) with an income-based support policy.

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INDIAN EXPRESS EXPLAINED

1) Goa Liberation Day

Why in News?

- Recently, Goa celebrated its 60th liberation day (December 19).

Why does Goa observe liberation day on December 19?

- An important port for trade and military operations, Goa was ruled by the **Portuguese** for more than 450 years.
- While historically, revolts against Portuguese rulers and their policies were recorded in the 18th and 19th century too, on **June 18, 1946**, the movement of Goa's liberation gathered momentum after socialist leader **Dr Ram Manohar Lohia** plunged himself into the freedom movement with many young Goans.
- The day is now observed as **Goa Revolution Day**.
- However, even as India became independent on August 15, 1947, **Goa continued to be under Portuguese rule 14 years after that**. After India's independence from the British in 1947, the calls for Goa's Liberation again gathered steam.
- After multiple agitations by freedom fighters, India made peaceful attempts for Goa's liberation through diplomatic channels.
- However, as a last resort, the Indian government then led by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, **sent in its armed forces to the coastal state after which the Portuguese surrendered and Goa was liberated on December 19, 1961**.
- This moment also marked the exit of the Portuguese, the last of the European colonisers to leave India.

What was 'Operation Vijay'?

- Considered as **the first tri-service operation** of the Indian armed forces, **Operation Vijay was about the liberation of the Portuguese territories of Goa, Daman and Diu**.
- While the Indian government was prepared to take military action from the beginning of December 1, it culminated into the 36-hour military operation that started on December 18, 1961 and concluded on December 19, 1961.

- While the army advanced into Goa from the North and the East, the Indian Air Force bombed the Portuguese airbase at Dabolim. The Indian Navy was tasked with preventing hostile action by Portuguese warships, securing access to the Mormugao harbour, and securing the Anjadip island off Karwar.
- By the evening of December 19, 1961, Portuguese Governor General Vassalo De Silva had signed the document of surrender after Indian armed forces, led by the army and backed by the air force and navy, had outnumbered and overwhelmed the Portuguese. Goa was then brought under the control of the Indian government.

What happened after the liberation of Goa?

- Goa was annexed into the Indian union and was the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu.
- In 1967, however, the question of whether the state should merge with Maharashtra or not was answered through a **plebiscite** in which the **majority of the Goan people voted against a merger**.
- It continued to remain a **Union Territory until 1987** when it was accorded **statehood. Goa became India's 25th state even as Daman and Diu continue to be Union Territories**.

2) What is the Sixth Schedule, and can Ladakh be included under it?

Why in News?

- Recently, an Member of Parliament (MP) from Ladakh demanded that the region be included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to safeguard land, employment, and cultural identity of the local population.
- The MP spoke in Parliament a day after Ladakh observed a shutdown to press for statehood. Representatives of the region have raised the demand repeatedly since the constitutional changes in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

What is the Sixth Schedule?

- The Sixth Schedule under Article 244 provides for the formation of autonomous administrative divisions — **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** — that have some **legislative, judicial, and administrative autonomy within a state**.
- ADCs have up to **30 members** with a **term of five years**, and **can make laws, rules and regulations** with regard to land, forest, water, agriculture, village councils, health, sanitation, village- and town-level policing, inheritance, marriage and divorce, social customs and mining, etc.
- The **Bodoland Territorial Council in Assam is an exception** with more than 40 members and the right to make laws on 39 issues.
- The Sixth Schedule applies to the Northeastern states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram (three Councils each), and Tripura (one Council)**.

Why does Ladakh want to be part of the Sixth Schedule?

- There was much enthusiasm initially, mostly in Leh, after the August 5, 2019 decisions that created two new Union Territories (Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh).
- The Buddhist-dominated Leh district had long demanded UT status because it felt neglected by the erstwhile state government, which was dominated by politicians from Kashmir and Jammu.
- **Ladakh wants some legislative, judicial, and administrative autonomy with more financial concessions.**

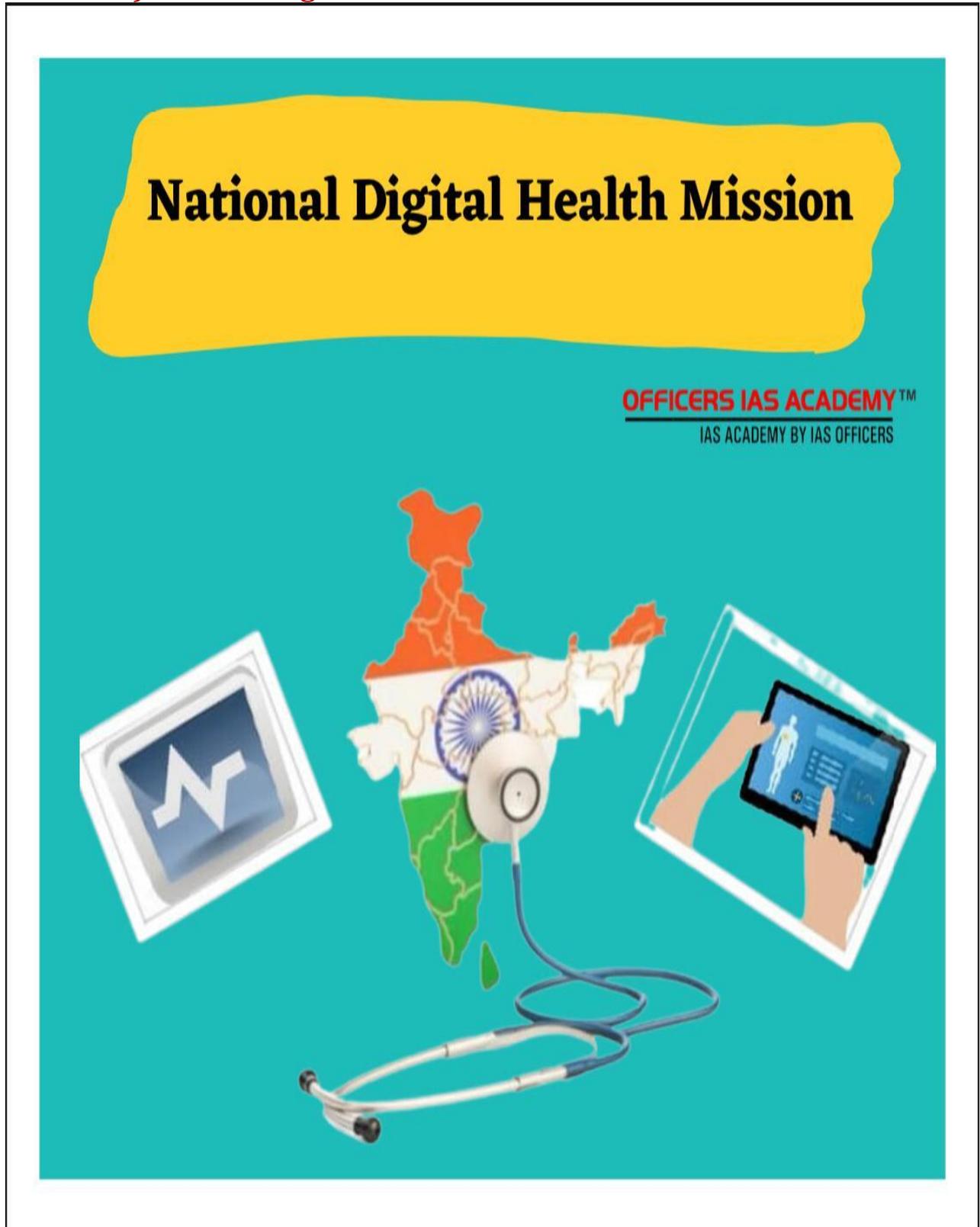
Can Ladakh be included in the Sixth Schedule?

- In September 2019, the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes** recommended the inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule, noting that the **new Union Territory was predominantly tribal (more than 97%)**, people from other parts of the country had been restricted from purchasing or acquiring land there, and its **distinct cultural heritage needed preservation**.
- Notably, **no region outside the Northeast has been included in the Sixth Schedule**.
- In fact, even in Manipur, which has predominantly tribal populations in some places, the autonomous councils are not included in the Sixth Schedule. Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, which are totally tribal, are also not in the Sixth Schedule.
- Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule would be difficult. The Constitution is very clear, the Sixth Schedule is for the Northeast. For tribal areas in the rest of the country, there is the **Fifth Schedule**.
- However, it remains the prerogative of the government — it can, if it so decides, bring a Bill to amend the Constitution for this purpose.

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INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

1) National Digital Health Mission



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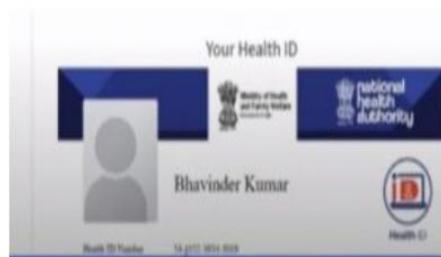
What is the NDHM?

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his 2020 Independence Day speech announced a major digital initiative in the form of National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).

The project will provide a **health ID to every person in the country**, and benefit the poor.



NDHM in Detail



NDHM seeks to **provide efficient and affordable health coverage through a wide-range of data and infrastructure services.**

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The key feature of this mission is the **technology part** – it will leverage open digital systems to provide high-quality healthcare for all. It will integrate various digital health services to create an ecosystem which can assimilate existing health information systems.

The government has said that it **will ensure security and privacy of personal information.**



What is a health ID?

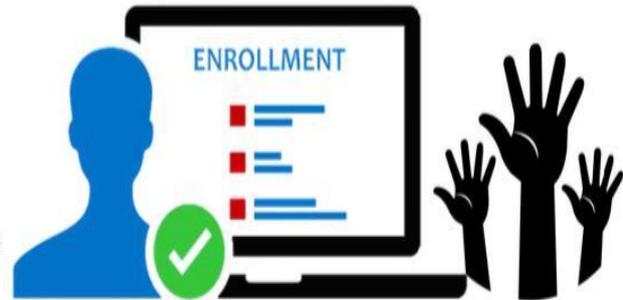


Under NDHM, Indian citizens will get a **digital health ID** which is basically a **digital format of all his/her health records** which will be linked to the registry of doctors and health facilities across the country.

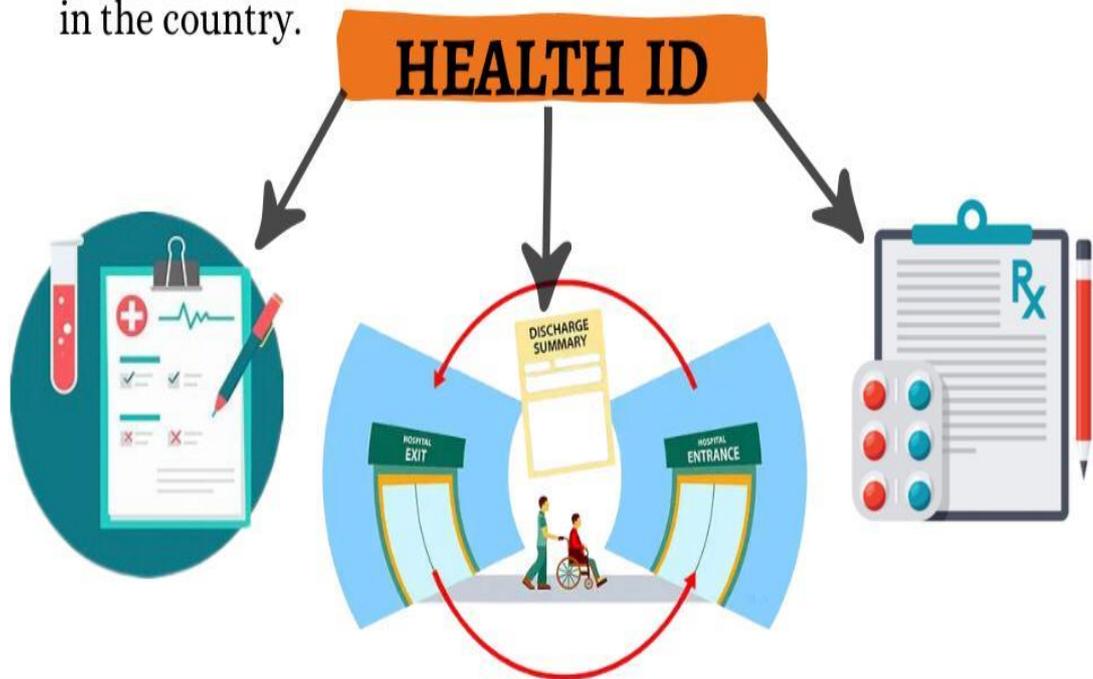
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The government has said that enrollment in the initiative will be **voluntary**.



The health ID will contain information about medical data, prescriptions and diagnostic reports and summaries of previous discharge from hospitals for ailments. The mission is expected to bring efficiency and transparency in healthcare services in the country.



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Expected Benefits

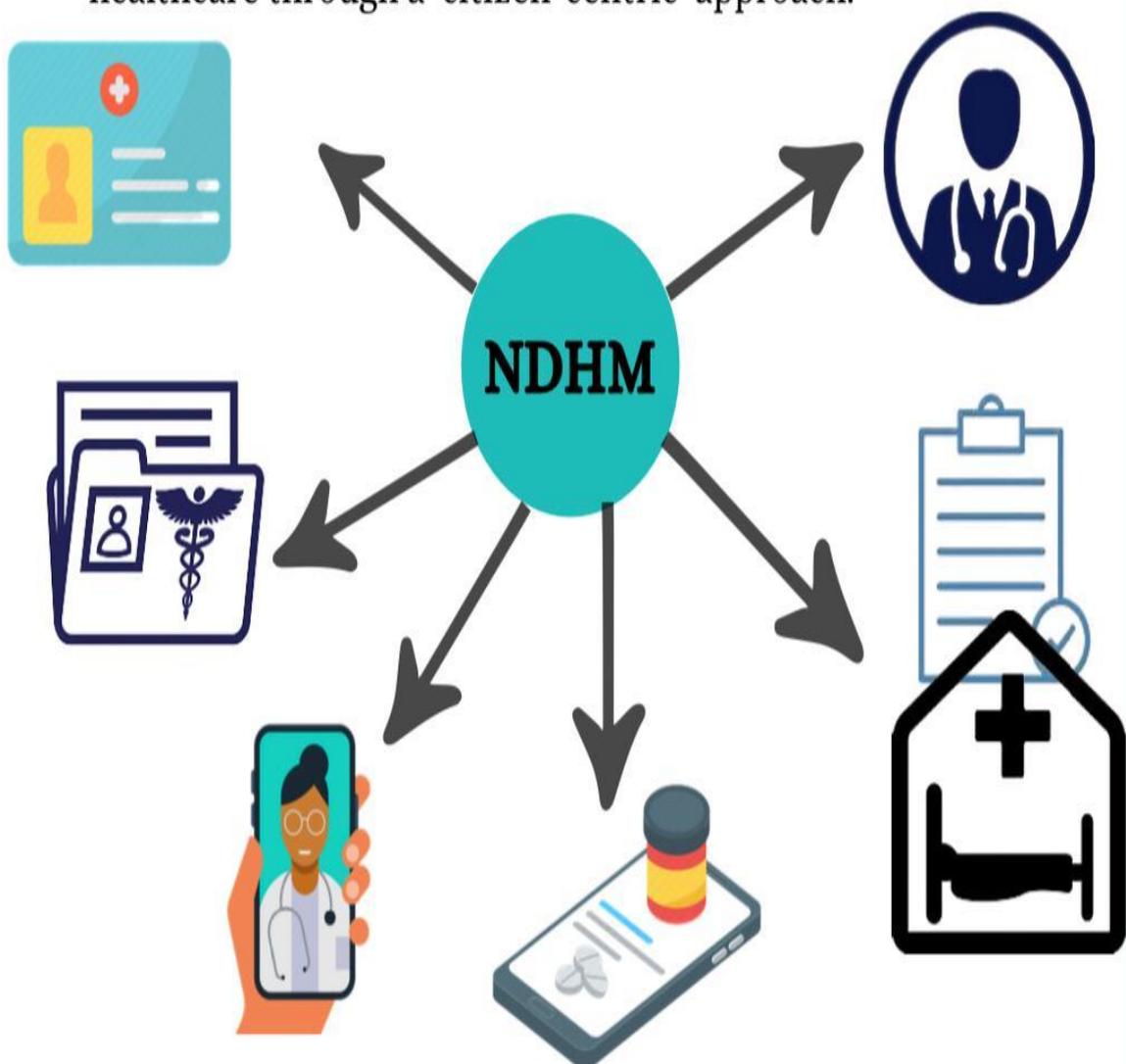
The NDHM aims to liberate citizens from the challenges of finding the right doctors, seeking appointment with them, payment of consultation fee, making several rounds of hospitals for prescription sheets and will empower all Indians with the correct information and sources enabling them to take an informed decision to avail the best possible healthcare.



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The NDHM comprises **six key building blocks or digital systems** – HealthID, DigiDoctor, Health Facility Registry, Personal Health Records, e-Pharmacy and Telemedicine – that will enable access to timely, safe and affordable healthcare through a ‘citizen-centric’ approach.

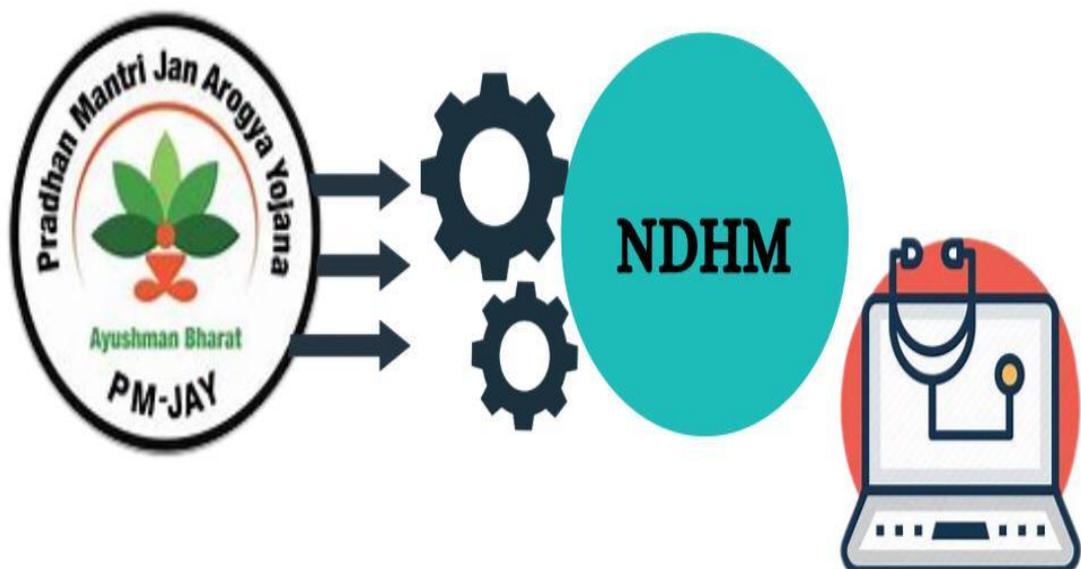


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Implementing agency

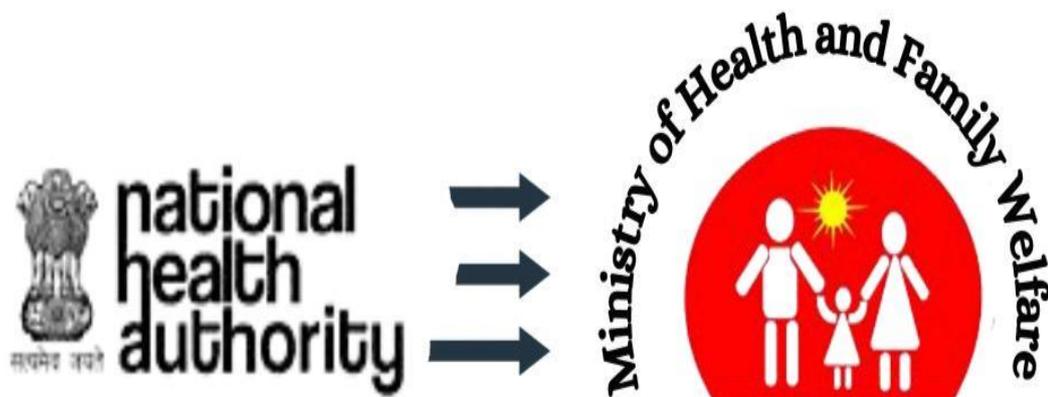
The **National Health Authority (NHA)**, the apex agency responsible for the implementation of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), has been given the mandate by the government to design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM in the country.



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NHA is an attached office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with full functional autonomy.



Why in News?

As on 3rd December 2021, 14,15,49,620 health IDs have been created in the country under the National Digital Health Mission.



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