

2019



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

POLITY AND NATION

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BusinessLine



1. Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

Why in News?

The four-day long mega cultural and literary event of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan - **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Parv** culminated in New Delhi.

- This event is primarily to showcase the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and also to promote the communication & artistic skills of students through various competitions.

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

- It was launched in 2015 to promote engagement amongst the people of different States/UTs so as to enhance mutual understanding and bonding between people of diverse cultures, thereby securing stronger unity and integrity of India.
- It is an **initiative** of the **Ministry of Human Resource Development**.
- As per the programme each year every state /UT would be paired with another State/UT in India for reciprocal interaction between the people.
- The broad objectives of the initiative are as follows:
 - To **celebrate the Unity in Diversity** of our nation.
 - To **promote the spirit of national integration** through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian states and Union Territories.
 - To **showcase the rich heritage and culture**, customs and traditions of different states for enabling people to understand and appreciate the diversity that is India, thus fostering a sense of common identity.
 - To establish long-term engagements.
 - To create an environment which promotes learning between states by sharing best practices and experiences.

2. Postal Ballot Facilities For Absentee Voters

Why in News?

- Election Commission of India (ECI) has started working on detailed guidelines and Standard Operating Procedure (SoPs) to facilitate the process of postal ballot paper for absentee voters.
- Absentee voters include:
 - Persons employed in essential services e.g. railways, state transport etc.
 - Senior citizens of more than 80 years
 - Marked Person with disability (PwD) electors
- This will enable people from these categories to vote with ease and increase voter turnout.
- There are two aspects of this issue:
 - Creation of requisite infrastructure

- Suitable legal framework to facilitate the process
- At present, postal ballots is available to the armed forces and those on poll duty.

Efforts taken by Election Commission

- On the legal side, the Commission made the recommendation to the Ministry of Law and Justice following which the Central Government amended the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 accordingly in October, 2019.
 - A concept of '**absentee voter**' has been introduced and defined for the elections.
 - '**Absentee voter**' means a person belonging to such class of persons as may be notified, under Representation of the People Act, 1951.
 - '**Person with Disability (PwD)**' means a person flagged as person with disability in the database for the electoral roll.
 - '**Senior citizen**' for the purpose of this Part means an elector belonging to the class of absentee voters and is above 80 years of age.
 - Two categories of voters – '**senior citizen**' and '**PwD electors**' can vote **either as absentee voter or as a regular voter on the poll day**.
- The Commission is also taking a number of steps including personal contact under its **SVEEP initiatives** to make the electors aware of this new facility.
 - **Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program (SVEEP)** is the flagship program of the ECI for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.
 - SVEEP's primary goal is to build a truly participative democracy in India by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed decision during the elections.

3. AMRUT Scheme

Why in News?

- The 2nd round of the Centre's flagship urban development schemes - the Smart Cities Mission and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)- could be rolled out in 2020.
- The 1st round of the Smart Cities Mission that covers 100 cities would be 50% complete, i.e, 50 cities, by December 2019.

AMRUT Scheme

- AMRUT is the new avatar of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).

- AMRUT, launched in 2015, adopts a project approach to ensure basic infrastructure services.
- **The Mission will focus on the following Thrust Areas:**
 - Water Supply
 - Sewerage and septage management
 - Storm Water Drainage to reduce flooding
 - Non-motorised Urban Transport
 - Green space/parks
- Under this mission, 10% of the budget allocation will be given to states and union territories as incentive based on the achievement of reforms during the previous year.
- AMRUT will be implemented in 500 locations with a population of one lakh and above covering:
 - 13 cities situated on stems of main rivers
 - A few state capitals
 - Cities under HRIDAY scheme
 - Important cities located in hilly areas, islands and tourist areas.
- Central assistance will be to the extent of:
 - 50% of project cost for cities and towns with a population of up to 10 lakhs.
 - One-third of the project cost for those with a population of above 10 lakhs.
- Under the mission, states will transfer funds to urban local bodies within 7 days of transfer by central government.
- The mission period is up to March 2020.

4. Chief Justice of India

Why in News?

The President has appointed Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde, Judge of the Supreme Court as the 47th Chief Justice of India (CJI) with effect from November 18, 2019.

Appointment of CJI

- The **Chief Justice is appointed by the President** after consultation with such judges of the Supreme Court and high courts as he deems necessary.
- The Chief Justice of India and the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President **under clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution.**
- In the **Second Judges Case (1993)**, the Supreme Court ruled that the senior most judge of the Supreme Court should alone be appointed to the office of the Chief Justice of India.

5. National Health Profile

Why in News?

The 14th edition of National Health Profile (NHP) and its e-book (digital version) has been released by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI).

About NHP:

- National Health Profile (NHP) is an annual publication CBHI.
- The objective of NHP is to create a versatile database of health information of India and making it available to all stakeholders in the healthcare sector.
- It covers comprehensive information on demographic, socio-economic health status, health finance indicators, health infrastructure and health of human resources in the country.
- National Health Profile 2019:
 - The NHP highlights substantial health information under major indicators viz:
 - a. Demographic indicators: population and vital statistics.
 - b. Socio-economic indicators: education, employment, housing and amenities, drinking water and sanitation.
 - c. Health status indicators: incidence and prevalence of common communicable and non-communicable diseases.
 - d. Health finance indicators: health insurance and expenditure on health.
 - e. Health of human resources: availability of manpower working in the health sector.
 - f. Health infrastructure: details of Medical and Dental Colleges, AYUSH Institutes, Nursing Courses and Paramedical Courses

Key Findings of NHP 2019

- Life Expectancy: Life expectancy in India has increased from 49.7 years in 1970-75 to 68.7 years in 2012-16.
- Infant Mortality Rate (IMR): The IMR has declined considerably (33 per 1,000 live births in 2016), however differentials of rural (37) & urban (23) are still high.
- Population Growth Rate: There has been a consistent decline in the birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate in India since 1991 to 2017. The population however continues to grow as the decline in the birth rate is not as rapid as the decline in the death rate.
- Demographics: It found the high incidence of the young and economically active population.
 - It reports that 27% of population below 14 years, 64.7% in the age group of 15-59 and 8.5% above 60 years.
- Total Fertility Rate(TFR): NHP reports TFR of 2.3 for the country.
 - 2.5 for rural areas and 1.8 for urban area.

- Between 2009-10 and 2018-19, India's public health expenditure as a percentage of GDP went up by just 0.16 percentage points from 1.12% to 1.28% of GDP, and remains a far cry from the 2.5% GDP health expenditure that has been India's target for some years now.
- There are wide disparities in the health spend of states, the NHP points out. The Northeastern states had the highest and the Empowered Action Group (EAG) states plus Assam had the lowest average per capita public expenditure on health in 2015-16.
- It has been observed that the non-communicable diseases dominate over communicable in the total disease burden of the country.

6. Electoral Bonds Worth ₹232 Crore Sold In October: ADR

Why in News?

- 12,313 electoral bonds worth Rs. 6128 crore were sold from March 2018 to Oct 2019 as per estimates of non-governmental organisation- Association for Democratic Reforms(ADR). These Bonds were introduced by the Finance Bill, 2017.

Electoral Bonds

- Electoral Bonds are interest-free bearer instruments like Promissory Notes available for purchase from the State Bank of India within a designated window of 10 days in every quarter of the financial year.
- These are issued upon authorisation from the Central Government to intending donors, but only against cheque and digital payments ;it cannot be purchased by paying cash.
- It allows individuals and domestic companies to buy these bonds - issued in multiples of:
 - ₹1,000
 - ₹10,000
 - ₹1 lakh
 - ₹10 lakh
 - ₹1 crore
- Buyers of the bonds have to submit full KYC details at the time of buying.
- The identity of the donor is kept anonymous.
- The bonds remain valid for 15 days and can be encashed by an eligible political party only through authorised bank within 15 days.
- These bonds can only be encashed by political parties, which had secured at least 1 percent of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or state election.
- Donations through bonds will be tax deductible, and the benefitting political party will get a tax exemption for the amount received.

- These bonds are aimed at rooting out the current system of largely anonymous cash donations made to political parties which lead to the generation of black money in the economy.

7. Elephant Bonds Can Bring Back \$500 Billion Stashed Overseas

Why in News?

The High Level Advisory Group on Trade Policy (HLAG) headed by Surjit Bhalla has estimated that India could recover up to \$500 billion of black money stashed overseas - by issuing 'Elephant Bonds' to those with undisclosed wealth.

- These bonds would be an avenue for people to bring their offshore undisclosed wealth into India without fear of prosecution.
- The HLAG which recently released its recommendations to boost India's trade, intends for the money collected via this mechanism to be used towards funding infrastructure projects in the country.
- It will help in enhancing the tax base of government and give a boost to the economy amid slow-down.
- It can lower the real interest rate besides strengthening the rupee.

Elephant Bonds

- The proposal for the application of undisclosed wealth towards subscription of Elephant Bonds is:
 - 15% of the wealth shall be collected as tax to be deducted at source by the government.
 - 45% of the wealth shall be credited with the depositor.
 - Balance 40% of the wealth shall be invested in Elephant Bonds.
 - 75% of the interest rate earned on such bonds will be collected as tax by the government.
- The key contours of the Elephant Bonds are:
 - Long maturity period (for 20-30 years).
 - Issued in dematerialised form and tradeable on stock exchanges.
 - Issuance will be subject to KYC and beneficial ownership check.
 - Immunity from all laws including under foreign exchange, black money laws and taxation laws.
 - The fund would be managed by NIIF, an already existing professionally managed body anchored by Government of India in collaboration with other institutional investors.

8. National Unity Day 2019

Why in News?

- The 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas' or the National Unity Day is celebrated on October 31.
- It is the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel- who played an

instrumental role in India's struggle for independence, and later during the integration of the country.

National Unity Day

- The observance of National Unity Day on 31st October serves to reinforce our commitment to strengthen the security, unity and integrity of our country.
- It reaffirms the strength and resilience of our countrymen to withstand threats of security, integrity, sovereignty of the country.
- It will be marked by the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas Parade with participation of police force across the country.
- Since 2014, October 31 is celebrated as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas.
- At the time of independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a key role in convincing several princely states to align with the Indian Union. The day of his birth, therefore, celebrates his efforts and contributions.
- This year's **theme** of National Unity Day is **"Bring the Nation Together, United in Times of Strife and Rising Extremism"**.
- To commemorate the 144th Birth anniversary of Sardar Patel 'Run for Unity' - a marathon event is organised.
- Last year, The 'Statue of Unity' in Gujarat is sculpted in the honour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel which is the tallest in the world (182 m).

9. Lymphatic Filariasis

Why in News?

A day long National Symposium on the theme 'United to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis' was inaugurated by Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.

- The Union Minister also signed the 'Call to Action to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2021'.

About Lymphatic filariasis

- Filariasis is the common term for a group of diseases caused by parasitic nematodes belonging to the superfamily Filarioidea.
- The adult worms of these parasites live in the lymphatic system called Lymphatic Filariasis (LF).
- The three nematode parasites causing LF in human are Wuchereria bancrofti, Brugia malayi and Brugia timori, of these, only Wuchereria bancrofti and Brugia malayi are found in India.
- This mosquito grows in dirty accumulated water. Infection occurs when filarial parasites are transmitted to humans through mosquitoes.
- Lymphatic Filariasis (LF), commonly known as elephantiasis is a disfiguring, disabling disease, usually acquired in childhood.
- Lymphatic filariasis does not kill the affected people, but may cause permanent disfigurement, reduced productivity and social stigma.

- It is one of the oldest and most debilitating neglected diseases, which is currently endemic in 73 countries of the world, including India.

Indian Initiatives:

- Government of India launched the Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF) in 2018.
- By the end of February 2019, India successfully rolled out Triple Drug Therapy (IDA - a combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole) treatment across 4 districts including Arwal in Bihar, Simdega in Jharkhand, Nagpur in Maharashtra and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.
- The government is ready to scale-up the use of IDA in a phased manner starting from December 2019.

10. Lieutenant Governors For New Union Territories

Why in News?

Girish Chandra Murmu and Radha Krishna Mathur have been appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh respectively.

- This move has come after the Centre scrapped provisions of Article 370 and split it into two Union territories (UTs).
- After October 31, Kargil and Leh districts form Ladakh, while the rest of the region will constitute the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Now, India has 9 UTs and 28 states.
- The two Union Territories will have a common high court.

About the Union Territories:

- Article 1 of the Indian Constitution provides for three categories of territories:
 - Territories of the States
 - Union Territories
 - Territories that may be acquired by the government of India
- Articles 239 to 241 of the Constitution deal with the Union Territories.
- There is no uniformity in their administrative system.
 - Every UT is administered by the President acting through an administrator appointed by him.
 - An administrator of a union territory is an agent of the President and not head of state like a governor.
 - President specifies the designation of an administrator:
 - Lieutenant Governor - Delhi, Puducherry, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh
 - Administrator - Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

- The President can also appoint the governor of a state as the administrator of an adjoining union territory.
- The Parliament can establish a high court for a union territory or put it under the jurisdiction of the high court of adjacent state. Delhi is the only union territory that has a high court of its own.

Abrogation of Article 370

- On 5th of August 2019, the President of India promulgated the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 superseding the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954.
- The order effectively abrogates the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir under the provision of Article 370 - whereby provisions of the Constitution which were applicable to other states were not applicable to J&K.

11. Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0

Why in News?

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Pulse Polio Programme the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0 from December 2019 to March 2020.

- Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0 aims to achieve 90% pan-India immunisation coverage by 2022.
- The IMI 2.0 portal has also been launched at the event.
- The portal has been designed to capture information on the block-wise target of children and pregnant women to be vaccinated during the IMI drive and also the coverage data during the rounds of activity.

Timeline of Indian Immunisation Programmes

I. Expanded Programme of immunisation (EPI)

- The Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) was initiated in India in 1978 with the objective to reduce morbidity and mortality by providing immunisation services to all eligible children and pregnant women by 1990.

II. Universal Immunisation Programme

- UIP was launched by the government in 1985.
- It aims to prevent mortality and morbidity in children and pregnant women against 8 vaccine preventable diseases.

III. Mission Indradhanush

- Mission Indradhanush was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India in December, 2014.

- It targeted children under 2 years of age and pregnant women for immunisation.
- Vaccination was provided against eight vaccine-preventable diseases nationally and two other in selected states and districts.

IV. Intensified Mission Indradhanush

- To further intensify the immunisation programme, Indian government launched the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) in 2017.
- Under Intensified Mission Indradhanush, greater focus was given on urban areas which was one of the gaps of Mission Indradhanush.
- The programme provides vaccination against 8 life-threatening diseases in the entire country :
 1. Diphtheria
 2. Whooping Cough
 3. Haemophilus Influenzae type B (Hib)
 4. Tetanus
 5. Polio
 6. Tuberculosis
 7. Measles
 8. Hepatitis B
- In addition:
 - Vaccination against Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Rotavirus Vaccine (RVV), Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) and Measles Rubella (MR) Vaccine has been introduced in select states/UTs.

12. Pulse Polio Programme

Why in News?

October 2019 marks 25 years of Pulse Polio Programme in India. A special event was organised on 31st October to commemorate the silver jubilee.

About Poliomyelitis

- Poliomyelitis also known as Polio is a crippling and potentially fatal viral infectious disease.
- There is no cure, but can be prevented through immunisation.
- The strategy to eradicate polio is therefore based on preventing infection by immunising every child until transmission stops.
- There are two types of vaccines to prevent infection:
 - OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine): It is given orally as a birth dose for institutional deliveries, then primary three doses at 6, 10 & 14 weeks and one booster dose at 16-24 months of age.

- Injectable Polio Vaccine (IPV): It is introduced as an additional dose along with the 3rd dose of DPT (Diphtheria Pertussis Tetanus) under the universal immunisation programme (UIP).

About Pulse Polio Programme

- Pulse Polio Immunisation programme was launched in India in 1995.
- Under this programme children in the age group of 0-5 years are administered polio drops during National and Sub-national immunisation rounds every year.
- The Pulse Polio Initiative was started with an objective of achieving hundred per cent coverage under Oral Polio Vaccine.
- The last polio case in the country was reported from Howrah district of West Bengal with date of onset 13th January 2011.
- In 2014 the World Health Organisation declared India a polio free country.

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