



News Analysis (22 Jun, 2020)

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Assessment of Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

Why in News

- Recently, a study by the Ministry of Rural Development has observed that the **Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)** has not been able to achieve the desired objectives and failed to make a significant impact.
- The study was conducted as part of the **Fifth Common Review Mission (CRM)** for “**independent assessment**” of the progress of various programmes and schemes of the Rural Development Ministry.

Key Points

- **Study/Assessment:** The study was conducted by a team comprising retired bureaucrats, academics and research organisations etc. The team visited around 120 villages, in 21 districts across eight states

- **Major Findings:**

- **Low selection of Panchayats:** Since the launch of the scheme only 1,855 gram panchayats have been selected across five phases, with only seven in Phase 5.
- **Lack of Interest and Funds:** Model villages under the scheme are hit by lack of interest and funds. In many of SAGY villages, the MPs did not give any significant fund from **Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)**. **Example:**

In Arood village of Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh, out of 118 activities planned in 2014, only about 60 % have been achieved and the rest are pending for lack of funds.

- **Lack of Political Will:** The concept of SAGY has not percolated down to field officials due to lack of accountability and political will.
- **Issues with Declaration:** Even villages declared as Adarsh Grams in some districts were found yet to be declared **Open Defecation Free**.
- **Limited Impact:** In some cases, where MPs have been proactive, some infrastructure development has taken place, but the scheme has not made any perceptible impact.
- **Low Convergence of MGNREGA with MPLAD:** Lesser convergence of **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** with MPLAD was observed in few villages.
- **Rural Roads:** The study expressed concern over the quality of roads constructed under schemes of state governments and maintenance of rural roads under central **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**.
- **Positive Impact:** Progress of work was better in the Gram Panchayats where the MP has taken keen interest and allocated substantial amounts from MPLAD.

Example:

A village in Bhilwara Rajasthan was found to be very urbanised due the various development schemes taken up at the initiative of the Ex-MP.

- **Recommenations:**

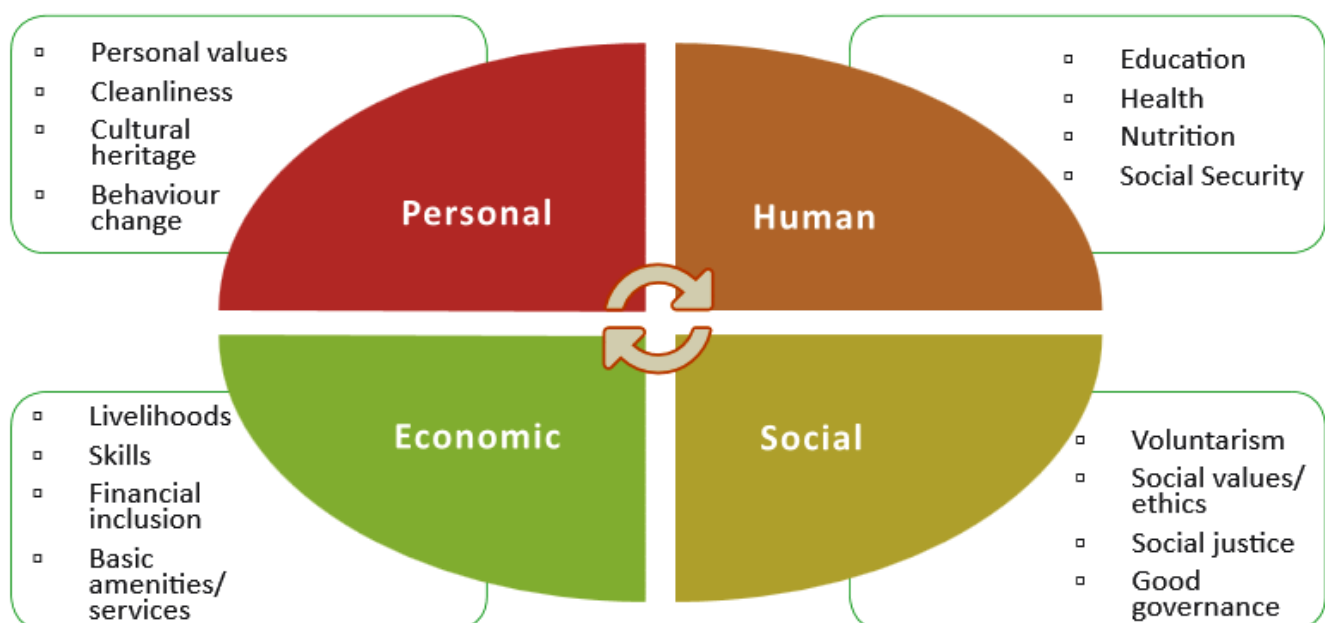
- **Need to Enhance Impact:** The report recommended that the Ministry of Rural Development may review the scheme for enhancing its impact.
- **Uniform Norms:** It has urged the Centre to frame a “**National Rural Road Policy**” to ensure uniform norms of construction and maintenance, irrespective of whether the road belongs to a state scheme or PMGSY.
- **Additional Funds:** The Centre should examine if the **Finance Commission** can provide funds for maintenance of rural roads, as many states have requested that the Centre should share the cost of maintenance.

Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

- SAGY is a village development project which was launched on **11th October, 2014** on the birth anniversary of **Jai Prakash Narayan**.

- **Goal:**
Under the Yojana, Members of Parliament (MPs) are responsible for developing the socio-economic and physical infrastructure of **three villages each by 2019**, and a total of **eight villages each by 2024**.
- **Objectives:**
 - To substantially **improve the standard of living and quality of life** of all sections of the population through Improved basic amenities, higher productivity and better livelihood opportunities.
 - To generate **models of local level development and effective local governance** which can motivate and inspire neighbouring Gram Panchayats to learn and adapt.
 - To nurture the identified Adarsh Grams as schools of local development to train other Gram Panchayats.
- **Process:**
 - **Gram Panchayat:** The basic unit for development.
 - **Lok Sabha MP:** Chooses a Gram Panchayat from within his/her constituency.
 - **Rajya Sabha MP:** Chooses Gram Panchayat from the rural area of a district of his/her choice in the State from which he/she is elected.
 - **Nominated MPs:** Choose a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country.
 - The MPs engage with the community, facilitate the Village Development Plan and mobilise the necessary resources particularly from **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** and philanthropies.
 - MPs also fill up critical gaps in the plan using the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADs) funds.

Holistic development through SAGY



Adarsh Gram: Model Village

A Model village is one which has **adequate physical and institutional infrastructure (sustainable environment, sanitation, clean water and livelihood)** in which minimum needs of all sections of the society are fully met so that they live in harmony with each other.

Way Forward

- The vision behind the evolution of SAGY villages was to **create model villages** by **ensuring convergence and dovetailing of schemes** and its proper implementation on priority basis. However, the seriousness required to achieve the motto is lacking. There is a need for MPs to be more responsible towards the scheme.
- SAGY gives focus to community participation and social mobilization of the village community can trigger a chain of other development activities in the village.
- At the same time, the Ministry of Rural Development should ensure that the SAGY villages are dealt with the vision envisaged under the scheme and are not left behind.

Source: IE

Secrecy of Ballot

Why in News

In a recent judgement, the **Supreme Court** has held that **secrecy of ballot** is the cornerstone of free and fair elections.

The choice of a voter should be free which is ensured by the secret ballot system in a democracy.

Key Points

- **Highlights of the Judgement:**

- The SC held that the principle of secrecy of ballots is an important postulate of **constitutional democracy** and referred to **Section 94 of the Representation of People Act (RPA) 1951**.

The section upholds the **privilege of the voters to maintain confidentiality** about their choice of the vote.

- The law must protect the right of voters to the secrecy of the ballot. Even a remote or distinct possibility that a voter can be forced to disclose for whom she/he has voted would act as a positive constraint and a check on the freedom to exercise the franchise.
- However, a voter can also **voluntarily waive the privilege of non-disclosure**.
 - The privilege ends when the voter decides to waive it and decides voluntarily to disclose their vote.
 - The court held that voters can neither be prevented from disclosing nor can be subjected to a complaint by anyone.

- **Background:**

- The judgment came on an appeal against the **Allahabad High Court** decision, setting aside the voting of a **no-confidence motion** in a Zila panchayat in Uttar Pradesh in 2018.

A **no-confidence motion** or **vote of no-confidence** or a **no-trust vote** can be sought to express that there is no longer confidence in the government.

- Allahabad HC found that some of the panchayat members had violated the rule of secrecy of the ballot.
- The SC referred to **Section 28(8) of the Uttar Pradesh Kshettra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961** and ordered a re-vote of the motion within the next two months, by the secret ballot system.

This provision states that a motion of no confidence shall be put to vote in the prescribed manner by secret ballot.

- **Restoring Secrecy of Ballot:**
 - Secrecy of ballot has become a **notional concept** after the introduction of **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)**.
 - Since voters believe that only they themselves and their trusted ones know who they voted for which is not true actually because **EVMs give a near accurate idea of voting patterns**.
 - Each EVM is used for about 1,400 electors and votes cast in the **EVMs are individually counted and tallied booth-wise**.
 - Before the introduction of EVMs, **ballot papers were often mixed** to prevent intimidation of voters by disclosure of voting patterns.
 - The idea of voting patterns gives an **advantage to political parties** which can be neutralised if **totalisers** are deployed to count votes in a constituency.
 - **Totaliser:**
 - It is a mechanism which **allows votes from 14 booths to be counted together**.
 - This result obtained is **without disclosure of votes polled by candidates at particular voting booths/stations**, which will allay the fears of voters against any pre-poll intimidation or post-poll victimisation by any candidate.

Representation of the People Act 1951

- The holding of **free and fair elections** is the sine-qua-non of democracy. To ensure the conduct of elections in free, fair and in an impartial manner, the constitution-makers incorporated **Part XV (Articles 324-329)** in the constitution and empowered Parliament to make laws to regulate the electoral process.
- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** is the watchdog of free and fair elections in the country and **Article 324** of the Constitution provides for its establishment.
- In this context, the Parliament has enacted the **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950** and **Representation of the People Act, 1951**.
- **Key provisions of the RPA 1951:**
 - It regulates the actual conduct of elections and by-elections.
 - It provides administrative machinery for conducting elections.
 - It deals with the registration of political parties.
 - It specifies the qualifications and disqualifications for membership of the Houses.
 - It provides provisions to curb corrupt practices and other offences.
 - It lays down the procedure for settling doubts and disputes arising out of elections.

Way Forward

- In a democracy, there is perhaps nothing more important than the credibility of the electoral process therefore elections should not only be fair but should be seen to be fair.

- The Election Commission needs to bat for making democracy truly vibrant and for voters' rights to free and fair elections as well as secrecy of their ballot. It cannot afford to allow parties the room to punish and reward voters on the basis of their voting patterns or indulge in what politicians euphemistically call booth management.

Source: TH

Civil Services Board

Why in News

Recently, Punjab government has set up a three-member **Civil Services Board (CSB)** for transfers and postings of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in the state.

Key Points

- **CSB:**
 - The **CSB is headed by the Chief Secretary of a state** and has senior most additional chief secretary or chairman, Board of Revenue, Financial Commissioner or an officer of equivalent rank and status as member.
 - The CSB **provides for the state to follow Centre's guidelines on giving a fixed tenure** of at **least two years** for cadre officers.
 - If anyone recommends the transfer of the officers before the completion of tenure, then the board will examine and effect it. The **final authority** in this regard is **the Chief Minister.**
- **Benefits:**
 - If the officials have a fixed tenure they **will be able to provide better administration.**
 - They will also **feel safe and try to stick to the rules** instead of pleasing political bosses.
 - Every official requires 3-6 months to get into the routine at his/her new place of posting. If they stay there for two years, it would mean **better delivery and stable tenure to people.**

- **Issues Involved:**

- If the tenure of bureaucrats is fixed, it **may create functional and administrative problems.**
 - The officers may overstep the authority and jurisdiction of the state government.
 - It may make them less answerable and accountable to legislators.
- With the fixed tenure rule, **the political executives feel their influence has been reduced to nothing**, since all the powers to examine a recommendation for a transfer lies with the CSB.
- The bureaucrats feel the urge to go to courts for effective implementation of guidelines **in letter and spirit.**

E.g. Haryana had the CSB in place but the guidelines are not followed there.

- **Background:**

- The Punjab government's notification is based on a 2014 order issued by the Central government. The order was aimed at **providing stability of tenure and checking political interference.**

Punjab is the 20th state to adopt the CSB.
- In October 2013, the **Supreme Court had also mandated minimum tenure for bureaucrats**, to insulate the bureaucracy from political interference and to put an end to frequent transfers of civil servants by political bosses.
 - Frequent and arbitrary transfers of officers before completion of a reasonable tenure on any post have always been considered as a major reason for the **declining standards of administration.**
 - IAS officers like Ashok Khemka, Durga Sakthi Nagpal and Kuldip Narayan, among others, have allegedly been victims of arbitrary suspensions and transfers.

Way Forward

- A healthy working relationship between Ministers, MPs, MLAs and civil servants is critical for good governance. Therefore, the state needs to take every stakeholder of governance in confidence.
- The state can learn from the loopholes of other states in implementing the fixed tenure rule.

Source: TH

National People's Party

Why in News

Political troubleshooting is going on in Manipur after the four MLAs of **National People's Party (NPP)** along with few others had withdrawn support from the ruling government recently.

Key Points

- **National People's Party:**

- The NPP got the status of national party in 2019, after **it was recognised as a state party in four states** — Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Meghalaya.
- It is the **eighth party to get the recognition** — after INC, BJP, BSP, NCP, CPI, CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress. It is also the first party from Northeast India to be recognised as a national party.

- **Types of Parties:**

- The **Election Commission of India** lists political parties as “**national party**”, “**state party**” or “**registered (unrecognised) party**”.
- The conditions for being listed as a national or a state party are specified under the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**.

- **National Party:**

For recognition as a national party, a party has to satisfy these conditions:

- 6% valid votes polled in any four or more states at a general election to the Lok Sabha or to the State legislative assembly; and, in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from any state or states.
- 2% of all Lok Sabha seats in the last such election, with MPs elected from at least three states.
- Recognition as a **state party in at least four states**.

- **State Party:**

For recognition as a state party, any **one of five conditions** needs to be satisfied:

- Two seats plus a 6% vote share in the last Assembly election in that state.
- One seat plus a 6% vote share in the last Lok Sabha election from that state.
- 3% of the total Assembly seats or 3 seats, whichever is more.
- One of every 25 Lok Sabha seats (or an equivalent fraction) from a state.
- An 8% state-wide vote share in either the last Lok Sabha or the last Assembly polls.

- **Loss of Recognised Status:**

Once recognised as a national or a state party, a political party loses its given status **only if it fails to fulfil any of the conditions for two successive Assembly and two successive Lok Sabha elections**.

That means a party retains that status irrespective of its performance in the next elections.

Sl.No.	Name of the Party (Abbreviation)	Symbol Reserved
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1.	Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	Elephant (In all States/U.T.s except in Assam)
2.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Lotus
3.	Communist Party of India (CPI)	Ears of Corn and Sickle
4.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM)	Hammer, Sickle and Star
5.	Indian National Congress (INC)	Hand
6.	Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	Clock
7.	All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)	Flowers and Grass
8.	National People's Party (NPP)	Book

Source: TH

Founder of Ahom Kingdom: Chaolung Sukapha

Why in News

Recently, there has been a controversy in **Assam** regarding **Chaolung Sukapha** who founded the **Ahom kingdom**.

Amidst the ongoing **India-China border tension**, he has been repeatedly referred to as a Chinese invader.

Key Points

- **Chaolung Sukapha:**



- He was a **13th century ruler** who **founded the Ahom kingdom** that ruled Assam for six centuries. The Ahoms ruled the land till the **province was annexed to British India in 1826** with the signing of the **Treaty of Yandaboo**.
- **Sir Edward Gait**, in his book **'A History of Assam'**, wrote that Sukapha is said to have left a place called **Maulung** (Burma which is now known as Myanmar) in **1215 AD** with eight nobles and some people.
- He and his people reached Brahmaputra valley and in **1235 AD, finally settled in Charaideo in upper Assam**.
- Sukapha established his **first small principality in Charaideo**, sowing the seeds of further expansion of the Ahom kingdom.

- **Ahoms:**
 - They **created a new state by suppressing the older political system of the bhuiyans** (landlords).
 - The Ahom state **depended upon forced labour**. Those forced to work for the state were called **paiks**.
 - Ahom society was divided into **clans or khels**. A khel often controlled several villages.
 - Ahoms **worshipped their own tribal gods** but instead **of imposing their own language, religion and rituals** on communities living in Assam, they **accepted the Hindu religion and the Assamese language**.
However, the **Ahom kings did not completely give up their traditional beliefs** after adopting Hinduism.
 - Ahom society was very sophisticated. Poets and scholars were given land grants and theatre was encouraged. Important works of Sanskrit were translated into the local language.
Historical works, known as **buranjis**, were also written, first in the Ahom language and then in Assamese.
 - Most of the Sukapha's people were men who later **married women from communities living in Assam**. **Intermarriage also increased assimilation processes**.
- **Significance:**
 - Sukapha successfully **assimilated different communities and tribes**. He developed very amiable relationships with the **tribal communities of Assam especially the Sutias, the Morans and the Kacharis**.
 - He is widely referred to as the architect of '**Bor Asom**' or '**Greater Assam**' because he **consolidated power, culture and religion in the region and managed to group a diverse mix of people** in such a politically sensitive region crisscrossing South Asia and South-East Asia.
 - **Assam celebrates 'Asom Divas' on 2nd December every year** to commemorate Sukapha and his rule.

Way Forward

- Chaolung Sukapha was the architect of greater Assam and he laid the foundation for a robust and vibrant Assam through his policy of amity, unity and harmony.
- Offensive remarks on social media and misinterpretation of historical facts can lead to a rift between different communities in an ethnically diverse state like Assam and hurt the sentiments of people which should be avoided at any cost.

Source: IE

Presena Glacier Covered with Tarps

Why in News

Giant sheets of tarpaulin (tarps) are being used to cover **Presena glacier in northern Italy** to slow **melting caused by global warming**.

It is a part of the conservation project (undertaken by **Italian firm Carosello-Tonale**) which was launched in 2008 — at that point only **30,000 sq metres of the glacier** was covered.

Key Points

- **Covering of the Glacier:**
 - **Tarpaulin sheets (tarps)** are being laid over 1,00,000 sq metres of the Presena glacier.
 - Rs. 34,091 tarpaulin sheets will be sewn together once they are stretched over the snow to keep warm air out. Bags of sand are used to weigh them down.
 - This six-week process is repeated every year once the ski season is over and summer begins in full force.
 - A **ski season** is a period when skiing, snowboarding and other alpine sports are viable in an alpine resort.
 - The process of removing the protective tarps will begin in September, and will take six months.
- **Tarpaulin Sheets:**
 - **Tarpaulin** is a large sheet of strong, flexible and water-resistant material, often coated and made of plastics such as polyethylene.
 - **Geotextile tarpaulins** reflect sunlight, maintain a temperature lower than the external one, and thus preserve as much snow as possible.
 - There are similar glacier cover systems on a few Austrian glaciers, but the surface covered by the tarpaulins is much smaller.
- **Concern:**
 - Since 1993, the Presena glacier has lost more than one third of its volume.
 - The area is continuously shrinking, so the efforts are made towards covering the area as much as possible.

Presena Glacier

- Situated between the regions of **Trentino and Lombardy in Northern Italy**, the glacier is part of the **Presanella mountain** (Alps) group.
- It has a high altitude natural environment.

Source: IE

Gee's Golden Langur

Why in News

Primatologists have observed that the threat of **electrocution and inbreeding** is increasing among the Gee's Golden Langur.



Key Points

- **Scientific Name:** Trachypithecus geei
- **About:** Golden langurs can be most easily recognized by the color of their fur, after which they are named.
 - It has been noted that their fur changes colors according to the seasons as well as geography (region they live in).
 - The color of the young also differs from adults in that they are almost pure white.
 - They are highly dependent on trees, living in the upper canopy of forests. They are also known as **leaf monkeys**.
- **Habitat:** It is endemic to western Assam, India, and southern Bhutan. Their habitat is restricted to the region surrounded by **four geographical landmarks:** the foothills of Bhutan (North), Manas river (East), Sankosh river (West), and Brahmaputra river (South).
- **Threats:**
 - **Restricted Habitat:** As mentioned above, their habitat is restricted by natural boundaries further increasing the threat of extinction.
 - **Habitat Fragmentation:** Their habitat in Assam has fragmented drastically especially after a thrust on rural electrification and massive deforestation.
 - **Inbreeding:** Obstructions such as wires, and gaps in the forest due to felling, have increased the threat of inbreeding among golden langurs.

- **Conservation Efforts/Status:**

- The **Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi** entrusted the state zoo with the project for the conservation breeding of golden langur in Assam in 2011.
- In 2019, Bhutan recorded a drop of 62% in the population of golden langurs over the 2009 census.
- The recorded estimation in Assam in 2009 was 5,140. This year's census could not be completed due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

Source: TH

International Day of Yoga

Why in News

The International Day of Yoga (IDY) is observed on 21st June.

The **theme** for the year 2020 is '**Yoga for Health – Yoga at Home**', which takes into account the social distancing measures announced by most countries amid **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Key Points



- **Proposed by India:**

- The idea of IDY was proposed by India during the opening of the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), held in 2014.
- The UN proclaimed 21st June as IDY by passing a resolution in December, 2014.
- The **first Yoga Day celebrations in 2015** at Rajpath in New Delhi created **two Guinness World Records**.
 - It was the **world's largest yoga session** with 35,985 people.
 - **84 nationalities** participated in it.

- **About Yoga:**
 - Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that **originated in India.**
 - The word '**yoga**' is **derived from Sanskrit** and means to join or to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness.
 - Today it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity.
- **Initiatives by India:**
 - The **Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH)** in its '**Common Yoga Protocol**' has listed Yama, Niyama, Asana, etc. among popular yoga 'sadhanas'.
 - The **Beauty & Wellness Sector Skill Council (B&WSSC)** has vocational education courses in Yoga for CBSE schools.
 - B&WSSC is established as a non-profit organization under the aegis of **National Skill Development Corporation**, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
 - About **96,196 candidates have been trained as yoga instructors** and trainers through various skilling initiatives like the **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**.
 - PMKVY is the **flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.**
 - Yoga is also a part of the **Fit India Movement.**
 - Fit India Movement is a nation-wide campaign that aims at encouraging people to include physical activities and sports in their everyday lives.

Source: IE
