



News Analysis (24 Aug, 2020)

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National Council for Transgender Persons

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has constituted the **National Council for Transgender Persons**, under the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**.

Features of Transgender Persons Act, 2019

- Seeks to establish **National Council for Transgender persons**.
- **Definition of a Transgender Person:** The Act defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes transmen and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.
- **Certificate of Identity:** The Act states that a transgender person shall have the right to self-perceived gender identity.
A **certificate of identity** can be obtained at the District Magistrate's office and a revised certificate is to be obtained if sex is changed.
- The Act has a provision that provides transgender the **right of residence** with parents and immediate family members.
- **Prohibition Against Discrimination:** The Act **prohibits discrimination** against a transgender person in various sectors such as education, employment, and healthcare etc.
- **Punishment:** It states that the offences against transgender persons will attract imprisonment between six months and two years, in addition to a fine.

Key Points

- **Aim:**
 - To **mainstream the transgender community's concerns**, focusing on **livelihood issues** as well as to raise awareness about the trans community, so that transpersons are accepted within families and in the larger society.
 - To ensure that **transgender welfare boards** are set up in all States and essential needs of the transgender community, like housing, food, healthcare and education are met.
- **Functions:**
 - **Advising the Central government** on the formulation of policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.
 - **Monitoring and evaluating** the impact of policies and programmes designed for achieving equality and full participation of transgender persons.
 - **Reviewing and coordinating** the activities of all the departments.
 - **Redressing grievances** of transgender persons.
 - Performing such **other functions** as prescribed by the Centre.
- **Composition:**
 - Its **chairperson** will be the Union **Minister of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
 - It will also consists of:
 - **Representatives from five states or Union Territories** (one each from the north, south, east, west and northeast regions), on a rotational basis.
 - **Five members of the transgender community** (one each from the north, south, east, west and northeast regions).
The tenure of the community members shall be **three years**.
 - **Representatives from 10 central departments.**
 - The council will have joint secretary-level members from the **Ministries of Health, Home, Minority Affairs, Education, Rural Development, Labour and Law**.
 - In addition, there will be a member from the **Department of Pensions (Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions), NITI Aayog, National Human Rights Commission and National Commission for Women**.

Background

- **2013:** The government set up an expert committee to study the problems of transgenders and recommend solutions.
- **2014:** In **National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India case**, the Supreme Court of India declared **transgender people to be a 'third gender'**.
It also affirmed that the fundamental rights granted under the Constitution of India will be equally applicable to transgender people, and gave **them the right to self-identification of their gender as male, female or third-gender**.

- **2014:** A **private member Bill**, the Rights of Transgendered Persons, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha.
 - The bill looked at a range of entitlements of such persons, providing specifically for them in health, education sectors, skill development and employment opportunities, and protection from abuse and torture.
 - However, this Bill got lapsed.
- **2016:** The Government introduced its own Bill in the Lok Sabha and it was referred to a Standing Committee.
- **2019:** The Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019.
- **2020:** Government establishes the National Council for Transgender Persons.

Way Forward

- The establishment of National Council for Transgender Persons which seeks to increase awareness and inculcate sense of respect and acceptance for transgender community, is a welcome step. However, its upto the effective functioning of the council whether it will be able to identify the issues faced by the transgender community and accordingly advise the government.
- Apart from policies and regulations, there is also a need for an inclusive approach, sensitising legal and law enforcement systems in particular towards the issues of transgender community.

Source: TH

Open API Service in Aarogya Setu

Why in News

The government has announced a **new feature 'Open API Service'** for its contact tracing app **Aarogya Setu**.

Key Points

- The Open API Service of Aarogya Setu addresses the fear/risk of **Covid-19** infections and will help the people, businesses and the **economy to return to normalcy**.
Here, organizations can take informed decisions regarding the presence of employees in office and the need to explore work from home. Thus, risk of contracting is reduced without much compromising on activities of the entity.
- The Open API Service of Aarogya Setu, can be **availed by organizations and business entities**.
- **Conditions:**
 - Entities who are **registered in India**.
 - Entities with **more than 50 employees**.

- **Benefits to Organizations and Business Entities:**
 - They can use the Open API Service to query the Aarogya Setu Application in real-time.
 - They can get the health status of their employees or any other Aarogya Setu User.
 - The Open API Service enables organizations to check the status of Aarogya Setu and integrate it into its various Work from Home features.
- **Privacy Issue Addressed:**
 - The Open API shall only provide the Aarogya Setu status and name of the Aarogya Setu User (strictly, **with User's consent only**).
 - No other personal data shall be provided through the API.

API

- The term ‘API’ stands for ‘**Application Programming Interface**’.
- An API is an interface that can be used to program software that interacts with an existing application.
- In practice, an API is “a set of functions and procedures” that allow one to access and build upon the data and functionality of an existing application.

Open Source API

- An open source API, also called **public API**, is an application programming interface made publicly available to software developers.
- Open APIs are published on the internet and shared freely, allowing the owner of a network-accessible service to give universal access to consumers.
- These are to support businesses with limited capital to invest in digital applications.
- An overlapping term **web service** is a resource that’s made available over the **internet**. A Web service is a software system designed to support interoperable machine-to-machine interaction over a network.

APIs vs Web Services

- APIs and web services are not mutually exclusive.
- In fact, one is a subset of the other: **every web service is an API** — since it exposes an application’s data and/or functionality — **but not every API is a web service**. This is because the definition of a web service is quite restrictive:
 - **Web services require a network.** While APIs can be online or offline, web services must use a network.
 - **APIs are protocol agnostic.** While APIs can use any protocols or design styles, web services usually use specific protocols.
 - **Web services are not open source generally:** Instead, they tend to offer specific data and/or functionality to specific partners. Thus they are less prone to hacking than API.

Aarogya Setu

- Aarogya Setu was launched in April 2020. It was developed by the **National Informatics Centre** under the **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology**.
 - The motto of Aarogya Setu is *‘Main Surakshit, Hum Surakshit, Bharat Surakshit’*.
 - Since its launch, Aarogya Setu has continuously innovated and introduced more novel features like:
 - **e-pass integration,**
 - **QR Code scanning,**
 - **Sharing of Health status** with family/known persons, etc.
 - Aarogya Setu has emerged as the most downloaded contact tracing App in the world, with more than 15 crore users.
 - It aids the efforts of frontline health workers and the Government in Covid-19 mitigation and management efforts.
 - The **Aarogya Setu ITIHAS** interface which **uses location data** and Aarogya Setu analytics to predict emerging hotspots **at Sub Pincode** levels has been very effective in helping the health officials and administration to take necessary precautionary steps.
 - More than 30,000 hotspots have been identified at a very granular level of 300 m X 300 m and shared with State Governments and Districts.
- **Concerns:**
 - Government has issued guidelines to the employers to ensure that all their employees install this app.
 - This violates the right to privacy, which is a fundamental right as held by the Supreme court in **Puttaswamy case 2017**.
 - The data-sharing and knowledge-sharing protocol for the Aarogya Setu is **prone to misuse**, considering that India still **doesn't have data protection laws**.
 - Vulnerable sections like **migrant workers can't afford the smartphone** and the internet.
- In May 2020, the government **opened sourced the code** for its contact tracing app Aarogya Setu's Android and iOS versions.
 - Open sourcing the code for an app allows developers to take a closer look at how the app functions. They can also find bugs in the system and report the same to the creator.

Source PIB

BIS Draft Standard for Drinking Water

Why in News

Recently, the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has prepared a draft **standard for the supply system of piped drinking water**.

The draft has been titled as ‘**Drinking water supply quality management system – requirements for piped drinking water supply service**’.

Key Points

- **Draft Standard:**
 - It outlines the **process of water supply**, from raw water sources to household taps.
 - The draft standard is expected to make the process of piped **water supply more uniform, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas** of the country where the system runs on various government orders and circulars.
 - The draft has been developed keeping in view the **Centre’s Jal Jeevan Mission**. The **Jal Jeevan Mission aims** for providing safe and adequate drinking water to **all rural households by 2024** through tap connections.
 - It has been prepared by the **BIS’s Public Drinking Water Supply Services Sectional Committee**.
- **Features of the Draft:**
 - It outlines the **requirements for a water supplier or a water utility** on how they should establish, operate, maintain and improve their piped drinking water supply service.
 - **Guidelines for top management of the water supplier/utility** which includes:
 - Accountability and customer focus.
 - Establishing a quality policy for their service.
 - Monitoring the quality of water released to people.
 - Conducting a water audit.
 - It sets the **Indian Standard (IS) 10500** for the treated water for drinking. The IS 10500 outlines the **acceptable limit of heavy metals** such as arsenic, **pH value** of water, **turbidity, the total dissolved solids** in it, and the **colour and odour**.
 - Adoption of the concept of **District Metering Area (DMA)** where possible. DMA is a concept for **controlling leakages in the water network**, which is essentially divided into a number of sectors, called the DMAs, and where flow meters are installed to detect leaks.
 - The water supplier may provide **bulk water meters** in the water distribution system to ensure water audit, however the provisions should be made for domestic meters also.

The water supplier shall ensure that the consumers do not have direct access to the meters to avoid possible tampering of the meters.
 - The draft also mentions that **water should be sampled at the treatment plant every four hours** against quality parameters.

- **Background:**
 - Quality of drinking water became a contentious issue in November 2019 when a BIS report, released by Union Government, found **Delhi's tap water quality as the worst among 21 metros** and state capitals in the country.
 - The report had also found that tap water in 13 state capitals, including Bhopal, Chandigarh, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Chennai, did not comply with BIS standards.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- Under this the Union government envisages **to provide water supply to every household by 2024.**
- The Mission is based on **various water conservation efforts** like point recharge, desilting of minor irrigation tanks, use of greywater for agriculture and source sustainability.
- The Mission is based on a **community approach to water** and includes extensive Information, Education and Communication as a key component of the mission.
- The Mission will **converge with other Central and State Government Schemes** to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.
- The **Jal Shakti Ministry** is the nodal ministry for the implementation of the mission.

Source: IE

Sale of Electoral Bonds

Why in News

The Government may allow the sale of **electoral bonds** ahead of Assembly elections in Bihar in October-November 2020.

The **Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018** was notified in the official gazette on **2nd January 2018** and allows **periodic issuances of electoral bonds.**

Key Points

- Electoral Bond is a **financial instrument for making donations to political parties.**
- The bonds are issued in **multiples of Rs. 1,000, Rs. 10,000, Rs. 1 lakh, Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 1 crore without any maximum limit.**
- **State Bank of India is authorised to issue and encash** these bonds, which are **valid for fifteen days** from the date of issuance.

- These bonds are **redeemable in the designated account of a registered political party**.
 - Every party that is **registered under section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951** and has **secured at least 1% of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or State election** will be allotted a **verified account** by the **Election Commission of India**.
 - Electoral bond **transactions can be made only via this account**.
- The bonds are **available for purchase by any person** (who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India) **for a period of ten days each in the months of January, April, July and October** as may be specified by the Central Government.
 - A person being an individual can buy bonds, **either singly or jointly with other individuals**.
 - **Donor's name is not mentioned on the bond**.
- During general elections, the **central government may specify an additional period of thirty days for sale** of these bonds.
- There have been some occasions when the **government has deviated from the specified periodicity** for issuance of these bonds.

For example, the **sixth tranche** of electoral bonds was issued from **1st-10th November 2018** and electoral bonds were sold in the months of **March, April and May during 2019 general elections**.

- **Controversial Status:**
 - While the Scheme acts as a **check against traditional under-the-table donations** as it insists on cheque and digital paper trails of transactions, several key provisions of the scheme make it highly controversial.
 - **Anonymity:**
 - **Neither the donor** (who could be an individual or a corporate) **nor the political party is obligated to reveal** whom the donation comes from. In 2019, the **Supreme Court** held that all political parties who had received donations through electoral bonds must submit details to the Election Commission of India.
 - This undercuts a fundamental constitutional principle, the **freedom of political information**, which is an integral element of **Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution**.
 - **Defeating Transparency:**

It **defeats the fundamental principle of transparency in political finance** because it **conceals from public scrutiny the identity** of the corporates and moneybags.
 - **Asymmetric Opacity:**
 - The **government is always in a position to know who the donor is** because the bonds are purchased through the SBI.
 - This asymmetry of information **threatens to colour the process in favour of whichever political party is ruling** at the time.
 - **Chanel of Blackmoney:**
 - **Elimination of a cap of 7.5% on corporate donations**, elimination of requirement to **reveal political contributions in profit and loss statements** and also the elimination of the provision that a **corporation must be three years in existence**, undercuts the intent of the scheme.
 - Any **troubled, dying or shell companies can donate an unlimited amount anonymously** to a political party giving them a **convenient channel for business** to round-trip their cash parked in tax havens for a favour or advantage granted in return for something.

Way Forward

- There is a need for fixing the governance system and **effective regulation of political financing** along with bold reforms to break the vicious cycle of corruption and erosion of quality of democratic polity. It is crucial to plug the loopholes in the current laws to make the entire governance machinery more accountable and transparent.
- **Voters can help bring in substantial changes** by demanding awareness campaigns. If voters reject candidates and parties that overspend or bribe them, democracy would move a step higher.

Source: IE

Wildfires in California

Why in News

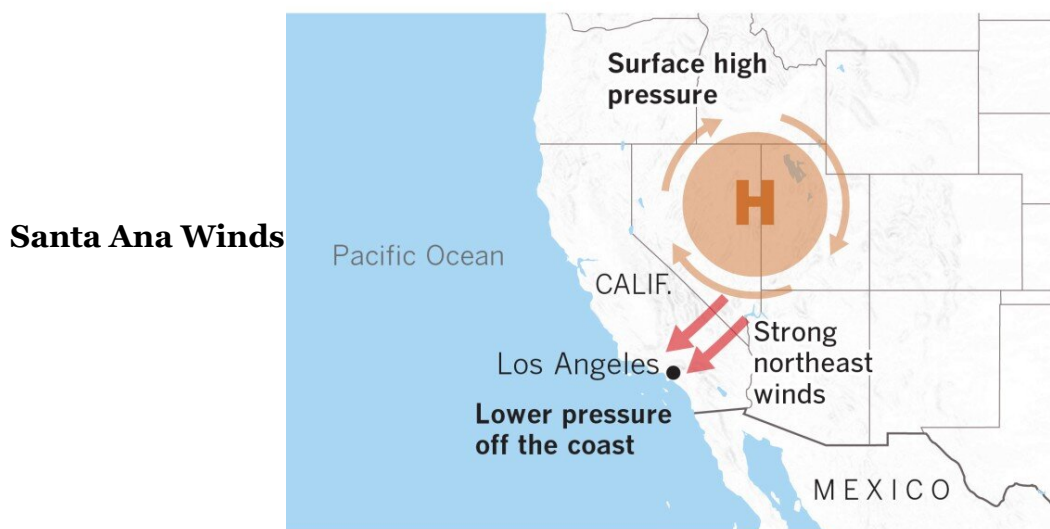
California (USA) is facing **sprawling wildfires** destroying more than 400,000 acres of forests in Northern and Central California.

The spark for many of these fires come from around 11,000 **lightning strikes** California has been hit by.

Key Points

- Historically, California has had many wildfires, which have increased manifold in recent times.
 - The 10 largest fires have occurred since 2000, including the **2018 Mendocino Complex Fire**, the largest in history of the USA..
 - The frequency of western U.S. wildfires has **increased by 400%** since 1970.
- California has **two distinct fire seasons**:
 - **First or western fire season:** From June through September
 - Due to **warmer and drier weather**.
 - Fires are more inland and in **higher-elevation forests**.
 - **Second Fire Season:** From October through April
 - Due to **Santa Ana Winds**.
 - Burn closer to **urban areas**.
 - **Three times faster** than first season fires
 - Responsible for 80% of the economic losses over two decades

Santa Ana winds



- The winds' name derives its name from the Santa Ana canyon in Orange County, California.

- Santa Anas are dry, warm (often hot) winds that blow **westward through Southern California toward the coast**.
- They're usually **seasonal**, and typically occur between October and March and peak in December.
- They originate when high pressure systems form over the **high-elevation deserts** of the **Great Basin** between the Sierra Nevadas and the Rocky Mountains.
- As they flow downwards and cross deserts, they become **very dry, warm, and gain speed**. The lack of humidity in Santa Ana winds dries out vegetation, making it better fuel for a fire.
- The wind also **fan the flames** and helps spread them.
- **Reasons for California's Wildfires:**
 - **Climate:** California, like much of the West, gets most of its moisture in the fall and winter. Its vegetation then stays dry throughout the summer because of a **lack of rainfall and warmer temperatures**, which ultimately serves as ignition for fires.

However with **global warming**, the temperature has increased by 1-2 degree Celsius, leading to an upsurge in cases of wildfires.
 - **Human intervention:** The spark for many fires arise due to human-made causes such as fallen power lines, accidents etc.

Due to urbanization, human habitation is increasingly moving areas near forests, known as the **urban-wildland interface**, that are inclined to burn.
 - **Suppressing Fires:** Owing to suppression of natural fires artificially for a long time, which would consume the dry inflammable materials in the forest, a lot of **dry material has accumulated** causing even more fires.
 - The United States Forest Service is now trying to rectify the previous practice through the use of prescribed or **“controlled” or cool burning**.
 - **Cool Burning :** Cool burning is done in a controlled manner by artificially creating small, localised fires to limit the amount of vegetation available in any given area. It means that any fires will not have any build-up of “vegetative fuel” to use to become a large, uncontrollable fire.
 - **Santa Ana Winds:** Santa Ana winds **dry out vegetation** and also move **embers** around, spreading fires.
- **Impact:**
 - **Economic loss** from destruction of life and property.
 - **Air pollution** by small particulate matter and also acids, organic chemicals, and metals along with dust and allergens.
 - **Land degradation** as high temperatures consume all nutrients and vegetation from a land, leaving it barren and infertile.
 - **Loss of biodiversity.**

Way Forward

- Some immediate solutions to wildfires include **not planting easily flammable tree species** such as eucalyptus and pine in forest fire regions, **not allowing human development** near forest zones, and **promoting policies that conserve water** like waste-water recycling, desert landscaping, and low-water consumption appliances.
- However in long -term working on **controlling greenhouse gas emission** and thus, climate change is crucial to controlling such incidents which have affected the whole world and not just California. Recent **Australian Bushfires**, and **Forest Fires in Uttarakhand** are some other examples.

Source: IE

Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana: ESIC

Why in News

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has **extended the Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana by one year to 30th June 2021.**

Further, the ESIC has **relaxed eligibility criteria and enhanced the payment of the unemployment benefit** under the Yojana (applicable from 24th March-31st December 2020).

Relief to the workers affected due to Covid-19 Pandemic

Relaxation in eligibility criteria and enhancement in the payment of relief under Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana of ESIC

- Payment of relief has been enhanced to 50% of average of wages from earlier 25% of average wages payable upto maximum 90 days of unemployment.
- Instead of the relief becoming payable 90 days after unemployment, it shall become due for payment after 30 days.
- Insured Person can submit the online claim directly to ESIC Branch Office instead of the claim being forwarded by the last employer and the payment shall be made directly in the bank account of IP.
- The Insured Person should have been in insurable employment for a minimum period of 2 years immediately before his/her unemployment and should have contributed for not less than 78 days in the contribution period immediately preceding to unemployment and minimum 78 days in one of the remaining 3 contribution periods in 02 years prior to unemployment.

Key Points

- **About the Yojana:**

- Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana was introduced w.e.f. 1st July 2018.
- Under it, **unemployment benefit is paid to the workers covered under the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme.**
- Unemployment benefit is paid in the **form of cash compensation upto 90 days, once in a lifetime**, to be **claimed after three months (90 days)** in one or more spells for being rendered **unemployed**.

The employee should have completed two years of insurable employment and has contributed not less than 78 days in each of the four consecutive contribution periods immediately preceding to the claim of the relief.

- The benefit **does not exceed 25% of the average earning per day.**

- **About the ESI Act, 1948:**

- It **applies** to all factories and notified establishments located in implemented areas **employing 10 or more persons** and is applicable on employees drawing wages up to **Rs. 21,000 per month (Rs. 25,000 for persons with disabilities)**.
- In July 2019, the **contribution rate** under the ESI Act was reduced from 6.5% to 4% (employers' contribution from 4.75% to 3.25% and employees' contribution from 1.75% to 0.75%).
 - In a financial year, there are **two contribution periods** each of six months duration.
 - **Employees** in receipt of a daily average wage upto **Rs.137** are **exempted** from payment of contribution.
- The Employees' State Insurance Scheme is **administered by a corporate body called the ESI Corporation**.
 - The Corporation is the **highest policy making and decision taking authority** under the ESI Act and oversees the functioning of the Scheme.
 - The **Union Minister of Labour and Employment** is its **Chairman**.
- It covers about 3.49 crore of family units of workers and provides cash benefits and medical facilities to 13.56 crore beneficiaries.

Source: PIB

Inclusion of the Disabled in National Food Security Act 2013

Why in News

The **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution** has asked State Governments/UTs to include all eligible **disabled persons** under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**.

Key Points

- The disabled persons should get their entitled quota of food grains under **NFSA & Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** as per provisions of the Act.
 - Those not already covered should be issued fresh ration cards as per the eligibility criteria.
 - The disabled person should also be covered by States/UTs under **the priority households** as per the criteria of identification evolved by them.
 - **PMGKAY** is a part of **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)** to help the poor fight the battle against **Covid-19**.
 - The scheme is aimed at providing each person who is covered under the **National Food Security Act** with an **additional 5 kg grains (wheat or rice)** for free, in **addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrain** already provided through the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.
 - The beneficiaries are also **entitled to 1 kg of pulse for free**, according to regional preferences.
- The **Section 10** of the NFSA provides for identification and coverage of persons under the **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** and the remaining households as **priority households** by the State Government.

Disability is one of the criteria for inclusion of beneficiaries under AAY households.
- The **Section 38** of the NFSA mandates that the Central Government may from time to time give directions to the State Governments for effective implementation of the provisions of the Act.
- The **Atmanirbhar Bharat Package** of the Government of India provides free food, along with other benefits, to the migrant labourers, who are not covered either under NFSA or any **States Scheme Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) Cards (Under Economic Stimulus-II)**.

Hence, the disabled persons **without ration cards are also eligible** for getting benefits under Atmanirbhar Bharat package.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013

- **Notified on:** 10th September, 2013
- **Objective:** To provide **for food and nutritional security** in the human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.
- **Coverage:** **75%** of the rural population and upto **50%** of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**.
- **Eligibility:**
 - **Priority Households** to be covered under TPDS, according to guidelines by the State government.
 - Households covered under existing **Antyodaya Anna Yojana**.

- **Provisions:**
 - 5 Kgs of foodgrains per person per month at Rs. 3/2/1 per Kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains.
 - The existing AAY household will continue to receive 35 Kgs of foodgrains per household per month.
 - **Meal and maternity benefit** of not less than Rs. 6,000 to **pregnant women and lactating mothers** during pregnancy and six months after the child birth,
 - Meals to **children upto 14 years of age.**
 - **Food security allowance** to beneficiaries in case of non-supply of entitled foodgrains or meals.
 - Setting up of **grievance redressal mechanisms** at the district and state level.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana

- It was launched in **December, 2000.**
- It involved identification of **one crore poorest of the poor families** from amongst the number of **Below Poverty Line** families covered under TPDS within the States and providing them food grains at a highly subsidized rate.
- Some target groups identified under AAY are:
 - **Landless agricultural labourers**, marginal farmers, rural **artisans/craftsmen** and persons earning their livelihood on a daily basis in the **informal sector.**
 - Households headed by **widows/terminally ill persons/disabled persons/senior citizens.**
 - Widows or terminally ill persons or **disabled persons** or senior citizens.
 - All **primitive tribal** households.

Source: PIB

Nuakhai Juhar

Why in News

The Prime Minister of India greeted the farmers on the occasion of Nuakhai Juhar (23rd August, 2020).

Key Points

- Nuakhai Juhar is an **agricultural festival**, also called **Nuakhai Parab** or **Nuakahi Bhetghat.**
 - It is celebrated to welcome the new crop of the season.
 - **Nuakhai** is a combination of **two words** that signifies eating of **new rice** as 'nua' means new and 'khai' means eat.

- This is the festival of **Western Odisha, southern Chhattisgarh** and adjoining areas of **Simdega (Jharkhand)**.
Its coastal counterpart is **Nabanna**, observed in Coastal Odisha.
- It is **observed on panchami tithi** (the fifth day) of the lunar fortnight of the month of **Bhadrapada** (August–September), the day after the **Ganesh Chaturthi** festival.
Lagan is the fixed time of the day to celebrate the festival.
- **Festive Activities:** Farmers offer the first produce from their lands to Goddess Samaleswari, the famous ‘Mother Goddess’ of Sambalpur district of Odisha.
Sambalpuri dance forms like Rasarkeli and Dalkhai can be witnessed.
- **Historical Background:**
 - It is believed to have been **adopted from the tribal communities of western Odisha**.
As the preparations reveal elements of both **tribal origins and the Hindu rituals**.
 - Nuakhai festival traces its origin to the Vedic period in **Panchyajna**. One among them was **Pralambana yajna** which means the cutting of new crops and offering them to the mother goddess.
 - **Oral tradition** of this festival dates back to the **12th century A.D.** when this festival was celebrated by **Chauvan Raja Ramai Deo**, Bolangir district of Odisha.

Source PIB

Behrupiya: Folk Artiste

Why in News

The **Covid-19 pandemic** has impacted the livelihood of several folk artistes including ‘**Behrupiyas**’.

Key Points

- The word ‘*behrupiya*’ is a **derivative of the Sanskrit word bahu** (many) and **roop** (form).
- *Behrupiyas* are **impersonators**, mostly known to perform in villages and markets all over India.
They put on various costumes to play figures from mythology, folklore and traditional stories.
- The *behrupiya* festival is a **traditional Indian style of street theatre** and takes place every year in different locations- Delhi, Ahmedabad, Udaipur, Jaipur, Kumbh, Muzaffarnagar and others.
 - **National Behrupiya Festival** was organised by the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts** (IGNCA) from 5th-8th October 2018.
 - IGNCA is an **autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture**.

- *Behrupiyas* were more than artists in the past. They **assisted in circulating, transmitting and publicising the various knowledge forms** in the popular domain of Samaj, the people. The **vibrant tradition of Ramlila** can also be seen as an extension of this practice which continues even today.
 - **Arthashastra** makes a mention of religious processions in the Mauryan times where artistes dressed as gods and were taken out in tableaux all around the kingdom.
 - **Rajasthan's Behrupiyas** had served **Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh** of the erstwhile **Jaipur kingdom**. They are also said to have helped freedom fighters during the struggle for Independence.
- **Different Forms of Traditional Theatres:**
 - Bhand Pather: Kashmir
 - Nautanki: Uttar Pradesh
 - Bhavai: Gujarat
 - Jatra: Bengal
 - Maach: Madhya Pradesh
 - **Bhaona**: Assam
 - Dashavatar: Konkan and Goa Regions
 - Tamaasha: Maharashtra
 - Krishnattam, Koodiyaattam and Mudi yettu: Kerala
 - **Yakshagana**: Karnataka
 - Therukoothu: Tamil Nadu

Source: TH
