



## News Analysis (04 Nov, 2020)

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### Extension of Food Fortification Scheme

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#### Why in News

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In order to fight chronic **anaemia** and **undernutrition**, the government is making plans to distribute **fortified rice** through the **Integrated Child Development Services** and **Mid Day Meal Schemes** across the country from the year 2021, with special focus on **Aspirational districts**.

This was decided in a review meeting of an **existing pilot scheme** which aims to distribute fortified rice in 15 districts.

#### Key Points

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- **Existing Scheme:** The centrally-sponsored pilot scheme was approved in February 2019, for a three-year period from 2019-20 onwards. Under it, one district each in 15 predominantly rice-eating States was selected.
  - It was found that, out of 15 states only 5 – Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh – have started the distribution of fortified rice in their identified pilot districts.
  - In other words, the scheme has only been implemented in five districts so far, although more than half the project duration is over.
- **Renewed Push:** The Food Corporation of India has now been mandated to scale up the annual supply of **Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK)** from the **current 15,000 tonnes to at least 1.3 lakh tonnes**.
  - To cover PDS, anganwadis and mid-day meals in the 112 aspirational districts, annual supply capacity would need to be increased to about 1.3 lakh tonnes.
  - Further, existing rice mills will be equipped with Blending Machines for mixing FRK with normal rice.

- **Other Related Initiatives:**

- **Milk Fortification Project** was launched by the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) in collaboration with the World Bank and Tata Trusts**, as a pilot project in 2017. It is intended to address vitamin deficiency in consumers.
- Recently, the month of September was observed as **Poshan Maah i.e. Nutrition month**. It includes a month-long activities focussed on antenatal care, optimal breastfeeding, anaemia, growth monitoring, girls education, diet, right age of marriage, hygiene and sanitation and eating healthy (food fortification).

### **Fortified Rice Kernels**

- Fortifying rice involves grinding broken rice into powder, mixing it with nutrients, and then shaping it into rice-like kernels using an extrusion process.
- These fortified kernels are then mixed with normal rice in a ratio ranging from 1:50 to 1:200.

### **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**

It was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1975, the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme** offers a package of six services (Supplementary Nutrition, Pre-school non-formal education, Nutrition & health education, Immunization, Health check-up and Referral services) to children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

### **Mid-day Meal Scheme**

- It was launched in 1995 as a centrally sponsored scheme.
- It provides that every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enrolls and attends the school shall be provided with a hot cooked meal, free of charge every day except on school holidays.
- The **Mid Day Meal Scheme** comes under the HRD Ministry's Department of School Education and Literacy.

### **Aspirational Districts**

- The programme was launched in January 2018 with the aim of expeditiously improving the socio-economic status of 117 districts through cooperative and competitive federalism.
- The **Aspirational Districts programme** aims to rapidly transform districts that have been showing relatively less progress in key social areas, and have emerged as pockets of under-development, thereby posing a challenge to balanced regional development.

## Food Fortification

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- **About:** According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, food fortification is defined as the practice of deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and to provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- **Types:** Food fortification can be done for foods widely consumed by the general population (mass fortification), to fortify foods designed for specific population subgroups, such as complementary foods for young children or rations for displaced populations (targeted fortification) and/or to allow food manufacturers to voluntarily fortify foods available in the marketplace (market-driven fortification).
- **Procedure:** The extent to which a national or regional food supply is fortified varies considerably. The concentration of just one micronutrient might be increased in a single foodstuff (e.g. the iodization of salt), or, at the other end of the scale, there might be a whole range of food–micronutrient combinations.
- In October 2016, **Food Safety and Standards Authority Of India (FSSAI)** operationalized the **Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2016** for fortifying staples namely Wheat Flour and Rice (with Iron, Vitamin B12 and Folic Acid), Milk and Edible Oil (with Vitamins A and D) and Double Fortified Salt (with Iodine and Iron) to reduce the high burden of micronutrient malnutrition in India.
- India's **National Nutritional strategy, 2017**, had listed food fortification as one of the interventions to address anaemia, vitamin A and iodine deficiencies apart from supplementation and dietary diversification.

**Source: TH**

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## Gulf Cooperation Council and India

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### Why in News

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Recently, India had a virtual meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a leading regional organisation comprising almost all Arab countries.

### Key Points

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- **Indian Workers Want to Return to Arab Countries:** India has asked the members of the GCC to facilitate the return of Indians who want to resume work with the relaxing of **Covid-19**-related restrictions. This can happen through sustainable **travel bubble arrangements**.
  - **More than eight million Indians** live and work in **West Asia**, with a **majority of them within the region covered by the GCC**, which includes **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE**.
  - ‘**Transport Bubbles**’ or ‘**Air Travel Arrangements**’ are **temporary arrangements** between two countries aimed at restarting commercial passenger services when regular international flights are suspended as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are **reciprocal in nature**, meaning airlines from both countries enjoy similar benefits.
- **Cooperation:** Both sides affirmed their commitment to **reform multilateral institutions** to reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and work together to **address contemporary challenges** such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, sustainable development and terrorism.
  - The **GCC welcomed India's inclusion in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member** from January 2021.
  - **India** assured continuing the **flow of food, medicines and essential items** to the Gulf region. Supply chains from India to the Gulf were not disrupted despite the lockdowns during the pandemic.

## **Gulf Cooperation Council**

- GCC was **established by an agreement** concluded in 1981 among **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE** in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives.
- The **structure** of the GCC consists of the Supreme Council (the highest authority), the Ministerial Council and the Secretariat General. The **Secretariat** is located in **Riyadh**, Saudi Arabia.
- It is a **political, economic, social, and regional organisation** according to its charter.



## India's Relations with the GCC

- **Political:** The governments of the GCC members are **India-friendly** and **Indian-friendly**.
  - The Prime Minister of India has received the '**Order of Zayed**', the highest civilian order of the UAE and the '**King Hamad Order of the Renaissance**', the third-highest civilian order of Bahrain.
  - In the recent past, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have **not adopted hostile posture** to India's domestic developments such as **removing the special status for Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370.**
- **Economic:** The GCC states are among **India's key suppliers of energy**, and **annual remittances** from Indians in these countries are worth an estimated USD 4.8 billion.
  - The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** and **Saudi Arabia** are **India's third and fourth-largest trading partners** respectively and the **total bilateral trade** of the GCC countries with India for the year **2018-19** stood at USD 121.34 billion.
  - UAE also features in the **top 10 sources of FDI inflows** into India.

- **Security:**
  - Both India and the GCC are members of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**.
  - Apart from the participation of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and others in **India's mega multilateral Milan Exercise**, India also has **bilateral exercises** with most of them.
    - **India and Oman hold annual bilateral exercises** across all three wings of the armed forces (Army Exercise 'Al Najah', Air Force Exercise 'Eastern Bridge', Naval Exercise 'Naseem al Bahr'). Further, Oman has provided the Indian Navy access to the **Port of Duqm SEZ** which is one of Indian Ocean's largest deep-sea ports.
    - India has a bilateral **naval (In-UAE BILAT)** as well as an **air force exercise (Desert Eagle-II)** with the **UAE**.

## Way Forward

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- The Gulf region has historical, political, economic, strategic and cultural significance for India. **India-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** can provide a boost to the relations.
- Presently, the **GCC region is volatile**, thus, India needs to safeguard its large economic, political and demographic stakes in the region.

## Source: IE

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## Cold Wave

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## Why in News

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As per the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, there are **cold wave conditions** over **Delhi**.

## Key Points

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- **Cold Wave:** A **rapid fall in temperature within 24 hours** to a level requiring substantially increased protection to agriculture, industry, commerce, and social activities.

- **Cold Wave Conditions:**
  - For the **plains**, a cold wave is declared when the **minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below** and is **4.5 degrees Celsius (C) less than normal for two consecutive days**.
  - For **coastal stations**, the threshold value of minimum temperature of 10 degree Celsius is rarely reached. However, the local people feel **discomfort due to the wind chill factor** which reduces the minimum temperature by a few degrees depending upon the wind speed.
    - A **wind chill factor** is a measure of the cooling effect of the wind on the temperature of the air.
- **India's Core Cold Wave Zone:** India's '**core cold wave zone**' covers Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Telangana.
  - In **2019, Delhi and adjoining areas** in the north had **experienced its coldest winter of the century**.
- **Cold Wave Situation in Delhi:**
  - On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020, **Delhi** recorded a **minimum temperature of 10 degree Celsius** which was **5 degrees C below normal**.
  - **IMD may consider** declaring a cold wave if the **temperature continues to stay the same for another day**.
- **Reasons for the Fall in Minimum Temperature:**
  - **Absence of cloud cover in the region:** Clouds trap some of the outgoing infrared radiation and radiate it back downward, warming the ground.
  - **Snowfall in the upper Himalayas** that has blown **cold winds** towards the region.
  - **Subsidence of cold air over the region:** Subsidence is the **downward movement of cold and dry air closer to the surface**.
  - Prevailing **weak La Nina conditions** in the Pacific Ocean.
    - La Nina is the **abnormal cooler sea surface temperatures** reported along the equatorial Pacific Ocean and it is known to favour cold waves.
    - **During La Nina years, the severity of cold conditions becomes intense.** The frequency and area covered under the grip of a cold wave becomes larger.
- **Winters 2020:** November is **expected to be colder than usual** after the **mean minimum temperature in October 2020 was 17.2 degrees Celsius**, the **lowest since 1962**, when it was 16.9 degrees Celsius.

## India Meteorological Department

- IMD was established in **1875**.
- It is **an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences** of the Government of India.

- It is the **principal agency** responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology.

**Source: TH**

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## **Centre's Stand on Central Vista Redevelopment Project**

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### **Why in News**

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The **Central Government** has recently tried to **justify** its decision to **construct a new Parliament building** under the proposed '**Central Vista Redevelopment**' project, in the Supreme Court (SC).

**One of the issues** raised by the petitioners was **if it's possible to refurbish and use the existing Parliament building**.

### **Central Vista Redevelopment Project**

- **The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs proposed the Central Vista redevelopment project in 2019.**
  - **The project envisages:**
    - **Constructing a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one.**
    - **Constructing Common Central Secretariat.**
    - **Revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath — from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.**
- North and South Block to be repurposed as museums.**
- **Currently, the Central Vista of New Delhi houses Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House, North and South Block, India Gate, National Archives among others.**

### **Key Points**

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- **Centre's Stand:**
  - Underlining the cost and infrastructure advantages of the proposed project, the Centre told the SC that **the question whether or not to have a new Parliament building is a policy decision which the government is entitled to take.**
  - The government had taken an important policy decision to construct a Parliament complex and central secretariat as the **existing one is under tremendous stress**. Further, the project cannot come up at Noida or elsewhere, but on Central Vista.



- **Arguments Put Forward by the Government:**
  - **Pre Independence building:** The **current one was built in 1927** to house the legislative council and was not intended to house a bicameral legislature that the country has today.
  - **Lack of Space:** The current building will be under more stress when the **number of seats to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are raised.** Both Houses are already packed and members have to sit on plastic chairs when joint sessions are held, diminishing the dignity of the House.
  - **Safety Concerns:** The existing building does not conform to **fire safety norms. Water and sewer lines are also haphazard** and this is damaging its heritage nature. Security concerns in the wake of the **2001 Parliament attack shows its vulnerable nature.** It is also **not quake-proof.**
  - **Cost Advantage:** Many central ministries **are housed in different buildings** with the result that the government ends up paying rent for many of them. The new building, a new central secretariat will help avoid this.
  - **Environmental Benefits:** The fact that people and officials have to run around the city to go to different ministries also **increases traffic and pollution.** The project **also proposes interlinking of metro stations** which will minimise use of vehicles.
- **Criticism:**
  - The Opposition, environmentalists, architects and citizens have raised many concerns even before the pandemic brought in extra issues.
    - They have **questioned the lack of studies** to ascertain the need for the project and its impact on the environment, traffic and pollution.
  - Several key approvals for the proposed Parliament building have been pushed during the lockdown. This led to allegations of a **lack of transparency.**
  - They argue that in the **situation created by the pandemic, the project must be deferred as the country can't afford it at this time.**

**Source: IE**

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## **Review of PMBJP**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers has held a **comprehensive review meeting of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** (PMBJP).

### **Key Points**

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- PMBJP has **achieved sales of Rs. 358** crores worth of pharma products through 6600 Janaushadhi Kendras during the **first seven months of the fiscal year 2020-21** (up to 31<sup>st</sup> October) and is **likely to surpass sales of Rs. 600 crore** for the entire year.
  - **Sales figure** has seen a **jump from Rs 7.29 crore in 2014-15 to Rs. 433 crore in 2019-20.**
  - **Janaushadhi Kendras** have grown from mere **99 stores in 2014-15 to around 6600 stores in 2019-20.**
- The **Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)** was appraised for **ensuring the supply of medicines and other pharma products like masks** to people at affordable rates during **Covid-19.**
  - BPPI is the **implementing agency of the PMBJP.**
  - It was **established in December 2008** under the **Department of Pharmaceuticals** and has been registered as an **independent society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.**
- **Suggestions on Improvement:**
  - BPPI should take measures to **reduce out of pocket expenditure of citizens on medicines**, especially of marginalised sections of the society **by strengthening supply chains and adopting innovative measures.**
  - There is a **need to work on increasing awareness of people regarding efficacy and quality of Janaushadhi medicines, increasing coverage** with a focus on remote and rural areas, and for **making sure availability of medicines** at each Janaushadhi shop.

## **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana**

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- It is a campaign **launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in 2008** under the name **Janaushadi Campaign**, which was **revamped as PMBJP in 2015-16.**
- **Aim:**
  - To extend the coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
  - To create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with an only high price.

- **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras:**

- Also called Janaushadhi Kendras, these were set up across the country under PMBJP to **provide generic drugs**.

**Generic drugs** are marketed under a **non-proprietary or approved name rather than a brand name**. These are **equally effective and inexpensive** compared to their counterparts.

- All drugs procured under this scheme are tested for quality assurance at the **National Accreditation Board Laboratories** (NABL) accredited laboratories and are compliant with the **World Health Organisation Good Manufacturing Practices** (WHO GMP) benchmarks.
- Government **grants of up to Rs. 2.5 lakhs** are provided for setting up of PMBJKs, which **can be set up by** doctors, pharmacists, entrepreneurs, **Self Help Groups** (SHGs), NGOs, charitable societies, etc. at any suitable place or outside the hospital premises.

- **Janaushadhi Week:**

It was celebrated across the country from **1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020**, to **inform and educate the general public** about the price benefits and quality of the medicines being sold at Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

- **Janaushadhi Sugam Application:**

This **mobile application was launched in August 2019** to help people in:

- **Locating** nearby Janaushadhi Kendra through Google Maps.
- **Searching** for Janaushadhi generic medicines.
- **Analysing** product comparison of generic versus branded medicine in form of Maximum Retail Price (MRP) and overall savings, etc.

**Source: PIB**

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## **Evaluation of National Monsoon Mission**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **National Council of Applied Economic Research** (NCAER) has **evaluated the economic benefits** of the **National Monsoon Mission** (NMM).

Established in **1956**, NCAER is India's **oldest and largest independent, non-profit, economic policy research institute**, based in **New Delhi**.

### **Key Points**

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- The study spanned **across 173 rain-fed districts** in **16 states** which appropriately represented agro-climatic zones, rain-fed areas, coverage of major crops, and incidence of extreme weather events in the country. It was conducted on behalf of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**.
- The study refers to **economic benefits as direct monetary gains to crop farmers, livestock rearers, and fishermen** in the country.
  - India's investment of nearly **Rs. 1,000 crore** in the NMM and **High-Performance Computing (HPC) facilities** would provide benefits worth Rs. 50,000 crore to nearly 1.07 crore **Below Poverty Line (BPL)** agricultural households and 53 lakh BPL fisherfolk households in the country.
- The **total annual economic benefits** to agricultural households, farmers and livestock owners taken together, has been calculated at **Rs. 13,331 crore** and the **incremental benefits over the next five years** are estimated to be about **Rs. 48,056 crore**.
  - The benefits are from accurate weather forecasting by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** and other agencies working under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
    - **Agro-meteorological services** for farmers is one of the most prominent weather services of IMD.
    - Every day Ocean **State Forecast (OSF)** and **warnings** to fishermen going out to the sea by the **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** helped in **elimination of less or not so productive trips** to the ocean.
    - **Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories** resulted in successful trips generating additional catches.
- **Data Analysis of the Benefits:**
  - Based on weather advisories, **98% farmers made modifications** such as changing variety/breed of the crop, arranging storage of harvest, early/delayed harvesting, changed crop, early/delayed sowing, changed the schedule of ploughing/land preparation, changed pesticide application schedule, changed fertiliser application schedule and changed scheduled irrigation.
  - **94% of farmers** were able to **avoid losses and increase income** because of services provided through NMM.
  - **82% of fishermen** surveyed, reported **using OSF advisories** before they venture into the sea every time.
  - A total of approximately Rs 1.92 crore additional income was generated from **1,079 successful fishing expeditions made using PFZ advisories**.

## National Monsoon Mission

- It was launched by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences in 2012**.

- **Aim:** To improve the forecasting skills by setting up a state-of-the-art dynamic prediction system for monsoon rainfall different time scales.
- NMM builds a **working partnership between the academic and research and development (R&D) organisations**, both **national and international**.
- Its **augmentation with the HPC facilities** has helped the country in achieving a paradigm shift in weather and climate modelling for operational weather forecasts.

**Source: IE**

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