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Report on National Nutrition Mission: NITI Aayog

Why in News

Recently, the **NITI Aayog** has released “**Accelerating Progress On Nutrition In India: What Will It Take**”, the third progress report on the **National Nutrition Mission** or the **Poshan Abhiyaan**.

Key Points

- **National Nutrition Mission:**

- **Launched in 2018**, it is the Government of India's **flagship programme** to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

It is backed by a **National Nutrition Strategy** prepared by the NITI Aayog with the goal of attaining "*Kuposhan Mukh Bharat*" or **malnutrition-free India**, by **2022**.

- **Aims:**

- To reduce **stunting, undernutrition, anemia** (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and **low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively**.
- To address the problem of **malnutrition** in a mission-mode.
- **50% of the total budget** comes from the **World Bank** or other multilateral development banks and the rest of the **50% is through Centre's budgetary support**.

The Centre's budgetary support is further divided into **60:40 between the Centre and the States, 90:10 for the north-eastern region and the Himalayan States** and **100% for the Union Territories (UTs)** without legislature.

- **Prevalence:**

- More than a third of children under five suffer from stunting and wasting and 40% of children between one and four are anaemic.
- Over 50% of pregnant and non-pregnant women were found to be anaemic, according to the **National Family Health Survey-4** released in 2016.

- **About the Report:**

- The **third progress report (October 2019-April 2020)** takes stock of the **roll-out status on the ground and implementation challenges** encountered at various levels through large scale datasets.

These datasets are the NFHS-4 and **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS)**.

- The **initial Reports I and II**, focused majorly on the **mission's preparedness and implementation** by States and UTs, respectively.
- The **review report was drafted in March 2020** and **does not factor worsening poverty and hunger levels since then**, which are expected to have gone down further due to the **Covid-19**.

- **Concerns Highlighted:**
 - On stunting, **India's targets are conservative as compared to the global target** defined by the **World Health Assembly (WHA)**, which is a prevalence rate of 5% of stunting as opposed to India's goal of reducing stunting levels to 13.3% by 2022.
 - The **target of reducing prevalence levels of anaemia among pregnant women** from 50.3% in 2016 to 34.4% in 2022 and **among adolescent girls** from 52.9% in 2016 to 39.66%, is also considered to be **conservative as compared to the WHA's target of halving prevalence levels**.
 - In the wake of the **pandemic**, experts warn that **deepening poverty and hunger may delay** achieving the goals defined under the Mission.
- **Suggestions:**
 - **On Stunting:**
 - To improve complementary feeding using both behaviour change interventions and complimentary food supplements in the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**.
 - To work towards investments in girls and women (education during childhood, reducing early marriage and early pregnancy, improving care during and after pregnancy) along with other social determinants.
 - To improve water, sanitation, handwashing with soap and hygienic disposal of children's stools with other effective interventions.
 - **On Wasting:**
 - To include interventions that go beyond the treatment of **severe acute malnutrition (SAM)** and also address moderate wasting, have the potential to achieve larger declines in wasting.
 - To scale-up to reach facility-based treatment of SAM to all those needing in-patient care.
 - To urgently release a full strategy for prevention and integrated management of wasting nationally.
 - **On Anaemia:**
 - To scale-up scenario that focuses only on health sector interventions which will achieve modest improvements in anaemia among women of reproductive age.

Way Forward

- As the National Nutrition Mission continues to play an important role in India's endeavour against malnutrition, India needs to now **accelerate actions on multiple fronts**. The projections are optimistic, and will need to be **re-adjusted for the Covid-19 disruptions** to health and nutrition services.

- There is a need to quickly graduate to a **POSHAN-plus strategy** which apart from **continued strengthening the four pillars of the mission** (Technology, Convergence, Behavioral change and Capacity building), also requires a renewed focus on other social determinants in addition to addressing the governance **challenges of the National Health Mission (NHM) and ICDS** delivery mechanisms.

Source: TH

43 More Mobile Apps Banned

Why in News

Recently, the government of India has blocked **43 new mobile apps, mostly Chinese**, in the country, including shopping website AliExpress.

This is in addition to a total of 177 **Chinese apps banned** till now.

Key Points

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** banned these mobile apps under **Section 69A** of the **Information Technology Act (IT Act), 2000**.

Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, was introduced by an **amendment to the Act in 2008**.

- It gives the Central government the **power to block public access** to any information online whether on **websites or mobile apps**.
- Under **Section 69A**, if a website **threatens India's defence, its sovereignty and integrity, friendly relations with foreign countries and public order**, the government can ban it, after following due procedure.
- Detailed procedures to do so are listed under the **Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009**.

- **Reasons behind banning apps:**
 - The action was taken **based on the inputs** regarding these apps for engaging in **activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order.**
 - Government has received many complaints from various sources about **misuse of some mobile apps** available on Android and iOS platforms **for stealing and transmitting users' data** in an **unauthorized manner** to servers which have locations outside India.
 - **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Center, Ministry of Home Affairs** also gave a comprehensive report against the misuse of the apps.
- **Implications of the Ban:**
 - The decision to ban these apps, which comes **amid continuing tensions between India and China**, is the clear message from India that it will no longer be a victim of China's **Nibble and Negotiate policy** and will review the norms of engagement.
 - The ban may affect one of China's most ambitious goals, namely to become the **digital superpower** of the 21st century.
 - It will provide a **good opportunity for Indian entrepreneurs** to quickly rise to fill market gaps. This is also great for the **Atmanirbhar Bharat mission**.
 - After the initial ban of apps, the government launched '**Digital India Atmanirbhar Bharat Innovate Challenge**' to encourage Indian application developers and innovators and facilitate their ideas and products.

Way Forward

- World today recognises that the next **source of economic growth** lies in the **digital economy** and given its raw material being data, thereby whoever builds the electronic backbone will have enormous advantages over everyone else.
- India must speed up **indigenisation, research and development** and **frame-up a regulatory architecture to claim data sovereignty.**

Source:TH

India's Assistance to Afghanistan

Why in News

Recently, at the **Afghanistan 2020 Conference**, India has announced about 150 projects worth USD 80 million.

- Afghanistan's President, officials from the **United Nations** (UN) and the **European Union** (EU) officials, besides representatives of other countries, attended the conference.
- Also, the **USA has decided to reduce its troop presence** in Afghanistan to about 2,500 **by January 2021**.

Key Points

- **India's Current Assistance:**
 - India will launch **phase-IV of high-impact community development projects**, which include around **150 projects worth USD 80 million**.
 - It has signed an agreement for building the **Shahtoot dam**, which would provide **safe drinking water** to 2 million residents of Kabul city.
It builds on the 202 km **Pul-e-Khumri transmission line of 2009**, through which India provides power to the city.

- **Earlier Assistance:**

- India's development programmes in Afghanistan are focused around **five pillars:**
 - Large infrastructure projects.
 - Human resource development and capacity building.
 - Humanitarian assistance.
 - High-impact community development projects.
 - Enhancing trade and investment through air and land connectivity.
- **Since 2001**, India has committed **USD 3 billion** towards rebuilding and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

During the **Taliban years from 1996 to 2001**, India did not invest

in Afghanistan.



- **Chabahar Port in Iran**, which provides **alternate connectivity to Afghanistan**.
Afghanistan's growth has been constrained by its landlocked geography and Pakistan blocking transit access made the situation even worse.
- **Pandemic Support:** India sent more than 20 tonnes of **medicines, other equipment and transported 75,000 tonnes of wheat** to Afghanistan to address the **Covid-19** challenge.

- **Shift in Indian Perspective:**

The Indian government's decision to invest in Afghanistan's future, where the Taliban is set to play a dominant role, is being seen as a **major departure from the past**.

India also participated in the commencement ceremony of the intra-Afghan talks in Doha in September 2020, where a 21-member Taliban team was also present. It **reflects India's realisation of ground realities and shifting sands in Kabul's power structure**.

- **Reduction of Troops by USA:**

- In **February 2020**, the **USA and the Taliban signed an agreement** in Doha, (Qatar's capital).
 - According to it, the **USA would withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan in 14 months** and would also **release Taliban prisoners**, held captive by the Afghan government.
 - In return, the **Taliban assured** that they would **not allow** transnational jihadist organisations such as **al-Qaeda** and the **Islamic State** to **use Afghanistan as their base** and also **committed to start direct talks with the Afghan government**, which began in September 2020.
 - With the **USA leaving at such a crucial point**, it **not only deprives Afghan forces of the support they need**, particularly the **airpower**, but also **affects their morale**.
 - The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO) has **committed to funding Afghan troops for four more years**.
- However, this decision **will leave Afghanistan with an uncertain future** as the **Taliban is expected to take over** after the troops' withdrawal.
 - The Taliban, who were **ousted from power in 2001 after the USA invasion**, have since been fighting both foreign troops and the Afghan government.
 - It now controls more than half of the country and contests the whole of it.
 - Since the agreement was signed, the Taliban have **conducted more than 13,000 attacks** nationwide.
 - According to a **UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UMAMA)** report in October 2020, nearly **6,000 Afghan civilians were killed** in the first nine months of the year and **45% of the deaths were by the Taliban**.

Way Forward

- The increasing level of violence in Afghanistan is a pressing concern. However, in **spite of the challenges, both sides** (the government representatives and the Taliban) **remain at the negotiating table**, and appear to have reached an early breakthrough.
- India calls for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and also believes that the **peace process** must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.
- India looks forward to walking hand in hand with the people of Afghanistan and the world community to work towards a peaceful, prosperous, sovereign, democratic and united Afghanistan.

Source: IE

Desalination Plants

Why in News

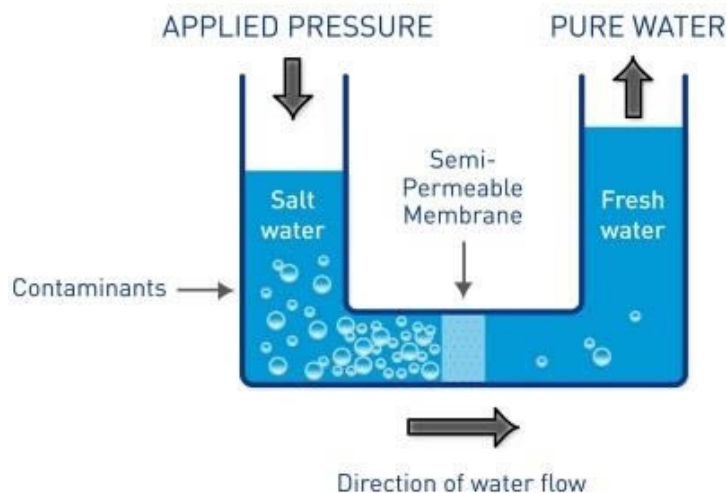
Recently, Maharashtra announced the setting up of a desalination plant in Mumbai.

- The plant will process **200 million litres of water daily (MLD)**, and will help in overcoming the **water shortage faced by Mumbai** in the months of **May and June**.
- **Maharashtra** will be the **fourth state** to experiment with Desalination Plants.

Key Points

- **Desalination Plants:**
 - A **desalination plant** turns salt water into water that is fit to drink.
Desalination is the process of **removing salts from water** to produce water that meets the quality (salinity) requirements of different human uses.
 - Most commonly used **technology** for the process is **reverse osmosis**.

REVERSE OSMOSIS



- An external pressure is applied to push solvents from an area of high-solute concentration to an area of low-solute concentration through a semi-permeable membrane.
- The **microscopic pores** in the membranes allow water molecules through but leave salt and most other impurities behind, releasing clean water from the other side.
- These plants are mostly set up in areas that have access to **sea water**.

- **Advantage of Desalination Plants:**
 - It can extend water supplies beyond what is available from the **hydrological cycle**, providing an “**unlimited**”, **climate-independent** and **steady supply** of high-quality water.
 - It can **provide drinking water** in areas where no natural supply of potable water exists.
 - As it generally **meets or exceeds** standards for **water quality**, water desalination plants can also **reduce pressure on freshwater supplies** that come from **areas** (over exploited water resources) that need protecting.
- **Disadvantage of Desalination Plants:**
 - **Costly to build and operate** desalination plants as the plants require huge amounts of energy.
 - **Energy costs** account for **one-third to one-half of the total cost** of producing desalinated water.
 - Because energy is such a large portion of the total cost, the **cost is also greatly affected by changes in the price of energy**.
 - **The environmental impact** is another disadvantage to water desalination plants. Disposal of the salt removed from the water is a major issue.
 - This discharge, known as **brine**, can change the salinity and lower the amount of oxygen (**Hypoxia**) in the water at the disposal site, stressing or killing animals not used to the higher levels of salt.
 - In addition, the desalination process **uses or produces numerous chemicals including chlorine, carbon dioxide, hydrochloric acid and anti-scalents** that can be **harmful in high concentrations**.
- **Opportunities:** The environmental problem can be changed into an economic opportunity as:
 - The **discharge (brine)** can also contain **precious elements like uranium, strontium as well as sodium and magnesium** which have the potential to be mined.
 - **Brine** has been used for **aquaculture**, with **increases in fish biomass of 300%**. It has also been successfully used to cultivate the **dietary supplement Spirulina**, and to irrigate forage shrubs and crops.
- **Use of Desalination Plants in India:**
 - It has largely been limited to countries in the **Middle East** and has recently started being used in parts of the **United States and Australia**.
 - In India, **Tamil Nadu** has been the pioneer in using this technology, setting up two desalination plants near **Chennai in 2010 and then 2013**.
 - The other states that have proposed these plants are **Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh**.

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- There is a **need to make desalination technologies more affordable**, i.e. increasing the viability of desalination for addressing **Sustainable Development Goal 6** (SDG-6: Ensure Access to water and Sanitation for All).
 - To do this, **technological refinement for low environmental impacts** and **economic costs**, along with **innovative financial mechanisms** to support the sustainability of desalination schemes, will likely be required.

Source:IE

Chang'e-5 Mission: China

Why in News

China has launched an **unmanned spacecraft** to bring back lunar rocks, the first attempt by any nation to retrieve samples from the Moon in **four decades**.

The **Chang'e-5 mission**, named after the ancient Chinese goddess of the moon, will seek to collect lunar material to help scientists understand more about the moon's origins and formation.

Key Points

- **Launch:** The **Long March-5 Y5 rocket**, carrying the **Chang'e-5 spacecraft**, was launched from **Wenchang Space Launch Center** (China).
- **Key Task of the Mission:** To drill 2 meters beneath the moon's surface and scoop up about 2 kilograms of rocks and other debris to be brought back to Earth.

It will **help scientists** learn about:

- Moon's origins,
- Volcanic activity on its surface and its interior, and
- When its magnetic field, key to protecting any form of life from the sun's radiation dissipated.

- **Functioning:**
 - Upon entering the moon's orbit, the spacecraft is intended to deploy **a pair of vehicles to the lunar surface, a lander and an ascender.**
 - A lander will drill into the ground, then transfer its soil and rock samples to an ascender that will lift off and dock with an orbiting module.
 - There will be an attempt to collect 2 kg of samples in a previously unvisited area in a massive lava plain known as **Oceanus Procellarum, or “Ocean of Storms”.**
 - Area of the moon where the spacecraft is due to land is **1-2 billion years old.**
 - If this is successful, the samples will be **transferred to a return capsule** that will return them to Earth, with a landing in China's **Inner Mongolia region.**
 - The entire mission is scheduled to take around **23 days.**
- **Significance:** If the mission is **completed as planned,** it would make **China** only the **third country** to have retrieved lunar samples, joining the **United States** and the **Soviet Union.**
 - The **Apollo programme** (which first put men on the moon), the **United States** landed 12 astronauts over six flights from 1969 to 1972, bringing back 382 kg of rocks and soil.
 - **The Soviet Union Lead Luna:** Deployed three successful robotic sample return missions in the 1970s. The last, the Luna 24, retrieved samples in 1976 from **Mare Crisium, or “Sea of Crises”** - a lunar basin.
 - The **Apollo-Luna sample** zone of the moon, while critical to our understanding, was undertaken in **an area that comprises far less than half the lunar surface.**
 - Subsequent data from orbital remote sensing missions have shown a wider diversity of rock types, mineralogies and ages than represented in the **Apollo-Luna sample collections.**
- **China’s Moon Missions:**
 - China made its **first lunar landing** in 2013.
 - In January 2019, the **Chang’e-4 probe** touched down on the far side of the moon, the **first by any nation’s** space probe.
 - Chang’e is a series of lunar probes launched by China National Space administration.
- **China’s Other Space Plans:**
 - It aims to have a **permanent manned space station in service by around 2022.**
 - Within the next decade, China **plans to establish a robotic base station** to conduct unmanned exploration in the **south polar region of the moon.**
 - It is to be developed through the Chang’e-6, 7 and 8 missions through the 2020s.

- **Other Important Mission to Moon:**
 - **Chandrayaan 3** by **ISRO**
 - **Artemis Mission** by **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**

Source:TH

IRNSS: Part of World Wide Radio Navigation System

Why in News

The **Maritime Safety Committee (MSC)** of the **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)** has recognised the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** as a component of the **World Wide Radio Navigation System (WWRNS)** during its 102nd session held virtually.

The IMO is the **United Nations specialised agency** responsible for the safety and security of shipping and the **prevention** of marine and atmospheric **pollution** by ships.

Key Points

- India has become the **fourth country** in the world to have its independent regional navigation satellite system recognised by the IMO as a part of the **World Wide Radio Navigation System (WWRNS)**.
- The other three countries that have its navigation systems recognised by the IMO are the **USA, Russia and China**.
- **Significance:**
 - The IMO has accepted IRNSS as an **alternative navigation module in Indian waters**. It was in use only on a pilot basis earlier but **now all merchant vessels are authorised to use it, even small fishing vessels**.
 - The navigation system **can now replace GPS in the Indian Ocean waters upto 1500 km** from the Indian boundary.
 - IRNSS is a **regional and not a global navigation** system.
 - With the recognition as a component of the WWRNS, the Indian navigation system is similarly placed as **Global Positioning System (GPS - USA)**, most commonly used by marine shipping vessels across the world or the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System (**GLONASS**).
 - It is being considered as a significant achievement towards the **'Atmanirbhar Bharat'** initiative.

Apart from navigational benefits it has strategic importance as it reduces overdependence on the global navigation system.

- **Important Navigation Systems:**
 - **USA navigation system:** The **Global Positioning System** (GPS) is a satellite-based navigation system that consists of 24 orbiting satellites.
 - **Glonass is Russian** Satellite Navigation System considered as a counterpart to GPS of the USA.
 - **BeiDou Navigation Satellite System** of **China:** A hybrid constellation consisting of around 30 satellites in three kinds of orbits.
 - **Galileo** is **Europe's** Global Navigation Satellite System.

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System

- IRNSS is an independent regional navigation satellite system developed by the **Indian Space Research Organization** (ISRO).
- The main objective is to provide reliable position, navigation and timing services over India and its neighbourhood.
- The IRNSS constellation **was named as “NavIC”** (Navigation with Indian Constellation) by the Prime Minister.
- NavIC provides **two types of services:**
 - **Standard Positioning Service** (SPS) is meant for the general public.
 - **Restricted Service** (RS) is an encrypted service meant for authorised users and agencies.
- Unlike the widely used GPS which includes 24 satellites, NavIC has **8 satellites** and their range is within India and its adjoining regions extending up to **1,500 km** from the **country's border**.
- Technically satellite systems with more satellites provide more accurate positioning information. However, compared to GPS which has a position **accuracy of 20-30 metres**, the NavIC is able to pinpoint location to an estimated accuracy of **under 20 metres**.

Source:IE

Land-attack Version of BrahMos Missile

Why in News

Recently, India has successfully **test-fired a land-attack version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile** from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The test by the Army comes over a month after the **Naval version of BrahMos was successfully test fired** from Indian Navy's indigenously-built stealth destroyer INS Chennai.

Key Points

- **Features of New Land-attack Version:**

- The **range** of the missile has been **extended to 400 km** from the original 290 km but its **speed** has been maintained at **2.8 Mach or almost three times the speed of sound**.
- The test was done in a “**top-attack**” configuration.
 - Most modern missiles, including BrahMos, **can be fired in both top-attack and direct attack modes**.
 - In **top attack** mode, the missile is required to climb sharply after launch, travel at a certain altitude and then fall on top of the target.
 - In **direct attack** mode, the missile travels at a lower altitude, directly striking the target.

- **Significance of the Test:**

- These tests **are a display of India’s tactical cruise missile triad**, i.e. launch capability from land, sea and air platforms.
 - India has **already deployed a sizable number of the original BrahMos missiles** and other key assets in several strategic locations along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China** in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The test marks the achievement of a critical milestone in **enhancing India’s capability of engaging enemy’s vitally important targets** in depth areas.
- In the last two-and-half months, **India has test fired a number of missiles** including **an anti-radiation missile named Rudram-1** which is planned to be inducted into service by **2022**.

- **BrahMos Missile:**



- An **amalgamation of the names of Brahmaputra river and Moskva river (Russia)**, BrahMos missiles are **designed, developed and produced by BrahMos Aerospace.**

BrahMos Aerospace is a **joint venture** company set up by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation** (DRDO) and **Mashinostroyeniya of Russia.**

- It is a **medium-range supersonic cruise missile** which can be **launched from submarines, ships, aircraft or land.**
 - **Cruise missiles** are defined as “an unmanned self-propelled guided vehicle that sustains flight through aerodynamic lift for most of its flight path and whose primary mission is to place an ordnance or special payload on a target.”
 - Depending upon the **speed**, such **missiles are classified as Subsonic (around 0.8 Mach), Supersonic (2-3 Mach) and Hypersonic** cruise missiles (more than 5 Mach).
- It is the **world’s fastest supersonic cruise missile**, as well as the **fastest anti-ship cruise missile in operation.**
- It **operates on the "Fire and Forget" principle**, i.e it does not require further guidance after launch.
- The missile has a **flight range upto 290-km.** However, **India's entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime** (MTCR) has extended the range of the BrahMos missile to reach 450-600 km.
- **Various versions of BrahMos**, including those that can be fired from land, warships, submarines and **Sukhoi-30 fighter jets**, have already been developed and successfully tested in the past.

A **hypersonic version** of the missile, capable of reaching a **speed of 5 Mach**, is under development.

Source: IE
