



News Analysis (01 Dec, 2020)

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Assistance to Disabled Persons Camp

Why in News

Recently, the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment has virtually inaugurated an **Assistance to Disabled Persons (ADIP) Camp** for **free distribution of assistive aids and devices to Divyangjan or Divyang**.

These are Hindi word meaning the '**one with a divine body**'. The Prime Minister decided that **persons with disabilities** should no longer be referred to as **disabled persons** or **viklang** (someone with **non-functional body parts**).

Key Points

- The camp was organized by the **Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), Kanpur**.
ALIMCO is a **not-for-profit Central Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)** established in **1972** and it works under the aegis of the **Department of Empowerment of Person with Disability (DEPwD)**.

- **Assistance to Disabled Persons Scheme:**

- It is in operation **since 1981.**

- **Definition:**

- The scheme follows the definitions of various types of disabilities as given in the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PWD) Act 1995.**
- PWD Act was replaced by the **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.**

- **Objective:**

To assist the needy disabled persons in **procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances** that can promote their **physical, social and psychological rehabilitation** by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential.

- **Grants:**

Grants-in-aid are released to **various implementing agencies** (Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, National Institutes, Composite Regional Centres, District Disability Rehabilitation Centres, State Handicapped Development Corporations, NGOs, etc.) **for purchase and distribution of aids and assistive devices.**

- **Assistance:**

- **Aids/appliances which do not cost more than Rs. 10,000** are covered under the Scheme for single disability. However, in **some cases the limit would be raised to Rs.12,000.** In the case of **multiple disabilities**, the **limit will apply to individual items separately** in case more than one aid/appliance is required.
- **Full cost of aid/appliance** is provided if the **income is up to Rs. 15,000 per month** and **50% of the cost of aid/appliance** is provided if the income is **between Rs. 15,001 to Rs. 20,000 per month.**

- **Other Related Government Initiatives:**

- **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016:**

"Person with disability" means a person with long term **physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments** which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others.

- **Accessible India Campaign: Creation of Accessible Environment for PwDs:**
A nation-wide flagship campaign for achieving universal accessibility that will enable PwDs to gain access for equal opportunity and live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life in an inclusive society.
- **DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme:**
Under the scheme, **financial assistance** is provided to NGOs for providing various services to PwDs, like special schools, vocational training centres, community-based rehabilitation, pre-school and early intervention etc.
- **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities:**
It aims to increase opportunities for students with disabilities for pursuing higher education and grants **200 fellowships per year** to students with disability.
- **Unique Disability Identification Project:**
 - It aims to create a national database for PwDs and issuing **Unique Disability Identity (UDID) Card** along with disability certificate.
 - Once the project covers all persons with disabilities, UDID Cards will be made mandatory for availing various government benefits.
- **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances:**
It aims at helping the disabled persons by bringing suitable, durable, scientifically-manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances within their reach.
- **International Day of Persons with Disabilities:**
 - It is celebrated worldwide on **3rd December** and was proclaimed in **1992** by **United Nations General Assembly** resolution 47/3.
 - It aims to **promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development** and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.
- **Initiatives for Mental Health:**
 - **National Mental Health Programme**, which was launched in **1982** to improve the status of mental health in India.
 - **KIRAN: Mental Health Rehabilitation Helpline** for addressing mental health issues, coordinated by the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), Tamil Nadu and National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR), Madhya Pradesh.

UP Ordinance on Unlawful Conversions

Why in News

The Uttar Pradesh (UP) government has recently **passed an ordinance to deal with unlawful religious conversions**, which are in opposition of various judgements of the **Supreme Court** (SC).

Key Points

- **UP Unlawful Religious Conversion Prohibition Ordinance, 2020:**
 - It makes religious conversion for marriage a **non-bailable offence** and the onus will be on the defendant to **prove that conversion was not for marriage**.
 - The notice period to the **District Magistrate** for the religious conversion is **two months**.
 - In case of conversion done by a woman for the **sole purpose of marriage**, the **marriage would be declared null and void**.
 - Violation of the provisions of the law would invite a jail term of not less than one **year extendable to five years with a fine of Rs. 15,000**.
 - If a **minor woman** or a **woman** from the **Scheduled Caste (SC)** or **Scheduled Tribe (ST)** converts, the jail term would be a **minimum of three years** and could be extended to **10 years with a fine of Rs. 25,000**.
 - The ordinance also lays down strict action, including **cancellation of registration of social organisations** conducting **mass conversions**, which would invite a jail term of not less than three years and up to **10 years** and a fine of **Rs. 50,000**.
- **Supreme Court on Marriage and Conversion:**
 - The SC in its various judgments, has held that **faith**, the **state** and the **courts** have **no jurisdiction** over an **adult's absolute right to choose a life partner**.
 - India is a **“free and democratic country”** and any **interference by the State in an adult's right to love and marry** has a **“chilling effect”** on freedoms.
 - Intimacies of marriage lie within a **core zone of privacy**, which is **inviolable** and the choice of a life partner, whether by marriage or outside it, is **part of an individual's “personhood and identity”**.
 - The absolute right of an individual to choose a life partner is **not in the least affected by matters of faith**.

- **Related Previous Judgements:**

- **Hadiya Judgement 2017:**

Matters of **dress** and of **food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership** are within the central aspects of **identity**. Neither the State nor the law **can dictate** a choice of partners or **limit the free ability** of every person **to decide** on these matters.

- **K.S. Puttuswamy or ‘privacy’ Judgment 2017:**

Autonomy of the individual was the ability to make decisions in vital matters of concern to life.

- **Lata Singh Case 1994:**

- The apex court held that India is going through a “**crucial transformational period**” and the “**Constitution will remain strong only if we accept the plurality and diversity of our culture**”.
 - Relatives disgruntled by the **inter-religious marriage** of a loved one could opt to “**cut off social relations**” rather than resort to **violence or harassment**.

- **Soni Gerry case, 2018:**

The SC warned judges from playing “**super-guardians**”, succumbing to “**any kind of sentiment of the mother or the egotism of the father**”.

- **Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case of Allahabad High Court 2020:**

- The right to choose a partner or live with a person of choice was part of a citizen’s **fundamental right to life and liberty** (Article 21).
 - It also held that earlier court rulings upholding the idea of **religious conversion for marriage as unacceptable** are not good in law.

Way Forward

Thus, the government implementing such laws needs to ensure that these do not curb one’s **Fundamental Rights** or **hamper the national integration** instead, these laws need to **strike a balance** between **freedoms and malafide conversions**.

Source:TH

Rise in NREGS Demand

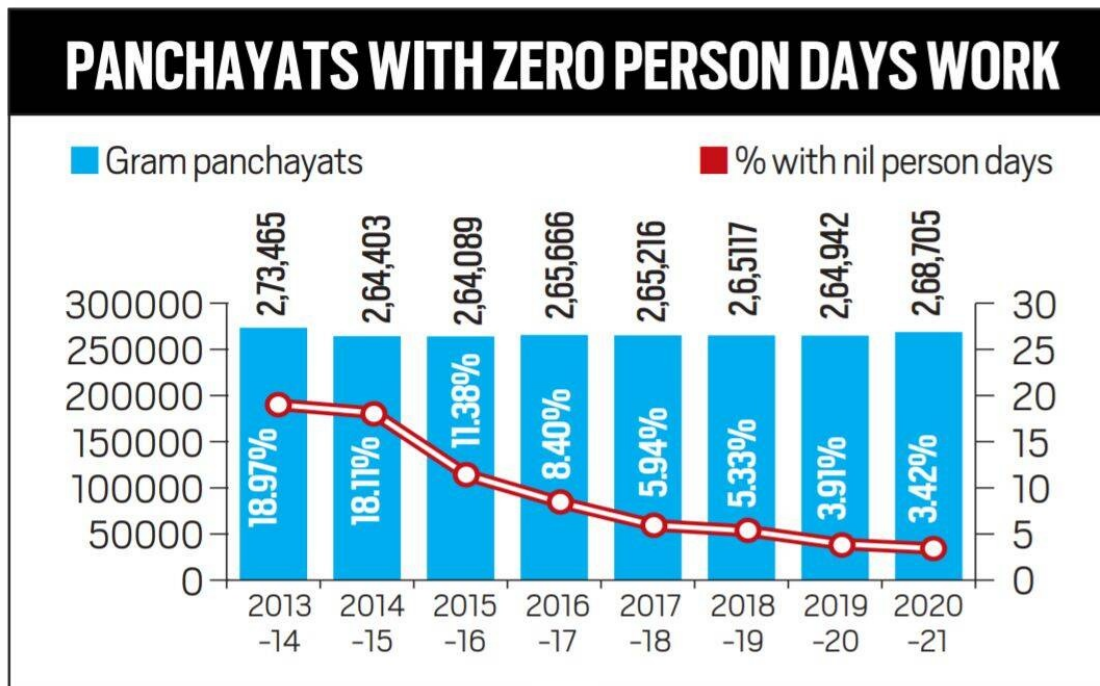
Why in News

A recent analysis of data available up to November on the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** (NREGS) portal shows that demand for work has been at all time

high.

Key Points

- The NREGS is a **demand-based scheme** and has emerged as a **safety net during the pandemic for jobless migrant workers** returning to their villages
- Despite a progressive relaxation in **Covid-19** curbs to revive the economy, **96% gram panchayats** have logged work under the scheme in the financial year (2020-21) as compared to previous seven years.



- The number of gram panchayats generating **nil person days of work** (panchayats with zero person days work) during the current financial year **are at an eight-year low** of only **3.42% of the 2.68 lakh gram panchayats** across the country.
In 2019, the number of gram panchayats generating nil person days during the entire period **was 3.91% of the total 2.64 lakh gram panchayats**.
- Over **96% of gram panchayats** across the country have **registered demand for work** under NREGS from April till November-end.
- **Over 6.5 crore households**, covering 9.42 crore individuals, have availed NREGS till November 2020, which is an **all-time high**.
 - Over 265.81 crore person days have been generated, which is **higher than** 265.44 crore generated in **2019**.
 - 1.98 crore households availed the scheme in October 2020, which is **82% higher than 2019**.
 - **Highest number of demand** for work came from **Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh**.

- The **wage expenditure** has also reached an **all-time high of Rs. 53,522 crore** during this period.
- **Tamil Nadu** has **reported the highest figure of households** that availed the NREGS across the country, since July and has been **followed by West Bengal**.
These two states were not covered under the **Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan**.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

- The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005** was notified by the Government of India on September, 2005 and was made **effective in February 2006**. Under it, the **NREGS was introduced**.
- The Act aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by **guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members** (at least 18 years of age) volunteer to do unskilled work.
- The central government bears the **full cost of unskilled labour**, and **75% of the cost of material** (the rest is borne by the states).
- It is a **demand-driven, social security and labour law** that aims to enforce the **‘right to work’**.
- **Ministry of Rural Development** in association with state governments, monitors the implementation of the scheme.

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan

- It was launched in **June 2020 to empower and provide livelihood opportunities to the returnee migrant workers and rural citizens** who had **returned to their home states** due to the **lockdowns**.
- It worked in mission mode for **125 days** with an outlay of **Rs. 50,000 crore**.
- A total of 116 districts across six states, namely **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha** were chosen for the campaign.
 - These districts covered the **maximum number** (about 2/3) of such **migrant workers who had returned**.
 - The chosen districts include 27 **Aspirational Districts**, districts which are affected by poor socio-economic indicators. These are aspirational in the context, that improvement in these districts can lead to the overall improvement in human development in India. It is a NITI Aayog’s Programme.

Source:IE

SCO Online International Exhibition

Why in News

Recently, the **Vice President of India** has launched the first ever **SCO Online Exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage**.

The launch happened during the **19th Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Heads of Government (SCO CHG)**, held in **New Delhi**.

India highlighted that the **crossborder terrorism** is the **biggest challenge** for the SCO countries.

Key Points

- **SCO Online International Exhibition:**
 - **Developed by: First ever of its kind** the exhibition was developed and curated by the **National Museum, New Delhi**, in active collaboration with SCO member countries.
 - **Participants:** Museums from India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
 - **Significance:**
 - **Buddhist Connection:** Buddhist philosophy and art of Central Asia connects **SCO** countries to each other and presents an excellent **opportunity for visitors** to access, appreciate and compare **Buddhist art antiquities from SCO** countries on a **single platform**.
 - **Knowledge about Different Schools of Buddhism:** The visitors can explore the Indian Buddhist treasures from the **Gandhara and Mathura Schools**, **Nalanda, Amaravati, Sarnath, etc. in a 3D virtual format**.
 - **Artistic Wealth and Excellence:** The international exhibition gives a glimpse of the artistic wealth displayed in various museums across Asia and also represents the artistic excellence embedded within an eclectic historical timeline.

- **Highlights:**
 - The **Pakistan Hall** depicts the life of **Gautama Buddha** and **buddhist art through a collection of impressive Gandhara art objects** including fasting Siddhartha and footprint of Buddha from Sikri, meditating Buddha from Sahri Bahlol, miracle of Sravasti from Gandhara, etc.
 - The **State Oriental Art Museum, Moscow** contributed objects which depict the **Buddhist Buriyat Art of Russia** through icons, ritual objects, monastery traditions etc.
 - **The Dunhuang Academy of China** contributed a rich **digital collection on buddhist art** which include **ingenious architecture, resplendent murals, decorative designs, costumes etc.**
- **India on Terrorism:**
 - India raised the issue of terrorism at the meeting and highlighted it as the enemy of humanity. It expressed its concerns on the **state sponsored terrorism and in particular crossborder terrorism.**
 - India supports the **BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy.**
 - Recently, **India's annual resolution on the issue of counter-terrorism** was adopted by consensus in the **First Committee** of the **United Nations General Assembly** (UNGA).
 - India also criticised Pakistan for using terrorism as a **instrument of state policy** and called upon the members of **SCO** to fight it **collectively.**

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- It is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation** and a **Eurasian political, economic and military organisation** aiming to maintain **peace, security and stability in the region** created in **2001.**
- The **SCO** is widely regarded as the "**Alliance of the East**", due to its growing centrality in Asia-Pacific, and has been the primary security pillar of the region.
- It is the **largest regional organisation in the world** in terms of geographical coverage and population, covering **three-fifths of the Eurasian continent and nearly half of the human population.**
- **Members:** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.
- **Observer states:** Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- **Dialogue Partners:** Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka.

Source:PIB

Influenza and Bacterial Infection

Why in News

Recently, researches at **Sweden's Karolinska Institute** have come out with findings on **superinfections** and have also highlighted that **influenza makes people more susceptible to bacterial infections**.

Key Points

- **Superinfections:** These are infection **occurring after or on top of an earlier infection**, especially following treatment with broad-spectrum antibiotics. It is an overgrowth of an opportunistic pathogen from the bacterial or yeast imbalance of systemic antibiotics.
 - For example, **influenza** is caused by a **virus**, but the **most common cause of death** in influenza patients is **secondary pneumonia**, which is caused by **bacteria**.
 - However, the **reason** behind influenza infections leading to an increased risk of bacterial pneumonia is **not known**.
- **Case study of Spanish Flu:**
 - It was an **influenza pandemic** that swept across the world in the year **1918–1920**.
 - It disproportionately hit young healthy adults and important reason for this was **superinfections** caused by bacteria, in particular **pneumococci**.
 - **Pneumococcal infections** are the most common cause of community acquired **pneumonia** and a leading global cause of death.
 - A prior **influenza** virus infection is often followed by a **pneumococcal infection**.
- **Findings of the Research:**
 - When an individual is **infected by influenza** different **nutrients and antioxidants, such as vitamin C**, leak from the blood.
 - The absence of nutrients and antioxidants **creates a favourable environment for bacteria in the lungs**.
 - The bacteria **adapt to the inflammatory environment** by **increasing** the production of an enzyme called **High temperature requirement A (HtrA)**.
 - The presence of **HtrA** weakens the **immune system and promotes bacterial growth in the influenza-infected airways**.
 - The **ability of pneumococcus to grow** seems to **depend on the nutrient-rich environment with its higher levels of antioxidants** that occurs during a viral infection, as well as on the **bacteria's ability to adapt to the environment and protect itself** from being eradicated by the immune system.

- **Significance:**
 - The results could be **used to find new therapies for double infections between the influenza virus and pneumococcal bacteria.**
A possible strategy can therefore be **use of protease inhibitors to prevent pneumococcal growth** in the lungs.
 - The information can **contribute to the research on Covid-19.**
However, it is still not known if **Covid-19 patients are also sensitive to such secondary bacterial infections.**

Influenza

- It is a **viral infection that attacks the respiratory system** i.e. nose, throat and lungs and is commonly called the **flu**.
- **Symptoms:** Fever, chills, muscle aches, cough, congestion, runny nose, headaches and fatigue.
- **Common Treatment:**
 - Flu is primarily treated with **rest and fluid intake** to allow the body to fight the infection on its own.
 - **Paracetamol may help** cure the symptoms but **Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)** should be avoided. **An annual vaccine can help prevent** the flu and limit its complications.
- Young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with chronic disease or weak immune systems are at high risk.

Pneumonia

- It is an infection that **inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs**. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus.
- **Cause:** Variety of organisms, including bacteria, viruses and fungi.
- **Symptoms:** Cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills and difficulty breathing.
- **Treatment:** Antibiotics can treat many forms of pneumonia. Some forms of pneumonia can be prevented by **vaccines**.
- The infection can be **life-threatening to anyone**, but particularly to **infants, children and people over 65**.

Source:IE

World AIDS Day 2020

Why in News

The World AIDS Day is observed on **1st December every year** all over the world.

Key Points

- It was founded in **1988** by the **World Health Organization** (WHO) and was the first ever global health day with a motto of raising public awareness about **Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome** (AIDS).
 - AIDS is a pandemic disease caused by the infection of **Human Immunodeficiency Virus** (HIV), which damages the human immune system.
 - In **2019**, 6,90,000 people died from HIV-related causes and 1.7 million people were newly infected, with nearly 62% of these new infections occurring among key populations and their partners.
- **Theme for 2020:** “Global solidarity, resilient HIV services.”
 - On World AIDS Day 2020, WHO is calling on global leaders and citizens to rally for “global solidarity” to **overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19 on the HIV response.**
 - **HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care services are all being disrupted** particularly in countries with fragile health systems.
 - Slowing progress means the world will be missing the “**90-90-90**” **targets for 2020**, which were to ensure that: **90%** of people living with HIV are aware of their status, **90%** of people diagnosed with HIV are receiving treatment, and **90%** of all people receiving **treatment** have achieved **viral suppression**.
 - Any slowing down in provision of these services will leave many vulnerable populations at greater risk of HIV infection and AIDS-related deaths and missing these intermediate targets will make it difficult to **achieve the target of elimination of AIDS by 2030.**
 - In **2020**, the **International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife**, it is a call for more protection and support to these health workers who have long been on the frontline of HIV service delivery.
- **Significance:**
 - It reminds the public and government that **HIV has not gone away** and there is still a **vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.**
 - It is an **opportunity to show solidarity** with the millions of people living with HIV worldwide.

Peacock Soft-shelled Turtle

Why in News

Recently, **Peacock soft-shelled turtle** (a turtle of a **vulnerable species**) has been rescued from a fish market in **Assam's Silchar**.

Key Points



- **Scientific Name:** *Nilssonia hurum*.
- **Features:**
 - They have a **large head, downturned snout** with low and oval carapace of dark olive green to nearly black, sometimes with a yellow rim.
 - The **head and limbs are olive green**; the **forehead has dark reticulations** and large **yellow or orange patches or spots**, especially behind the eyes and across the snout.
 - **Males** possess **relatively longer and thicker tails** than females.
- **Habitat:**
 - This species is confined to **India, Bangladesh and Pakistan**.
 - In india, it is widespread in the northern and **central parts of the Indian subcontinent**.
 - These are found in **rivers, streams, lakes and ponds with mud or sand bottoms**.
- **Major Threats:**
 - The species is **heavily exploited for its meat and calipee** (the outer cartilaginous rim of the shell).
 - Threats in the River Ganga to the species are those generic for all large river turtles, including **reduction of fish stock**, as a result of **overfishing, pollution, increase in river traffic, and sand-mining**, among others.

Source:IE
