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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY

Context:

Under the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)**, the Union government's health insurance scheme, approximately 20.32 lakh COVID-19 tests and 7.08 lakh treatments were authorised from April 2020 to July 2021.

- The total value of the tests and treatment stood at ₹2,794 crore.

Key Features of PM-JAY:

1. The world's largest **health insurance**/ assurance scheme fully financed by the government.
2. It provides cover of 5 lakhs per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empaneled hospitals in India.
3. Coverage: Over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable entitled families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) are eligible for these benefits.
4. Provides cashless access to health care services for the beneficiary at the point of service.
5. **The National Health Authority (NHA)** is the nodal agency responsible for the nationwide roll-out and implementation of the AB-PMJAY scheme.
6. This scheme is a **Centrally sponsored scheme with some Central sector components**.

Eligibility:

1. No restrictions on family size, age or gender.
2. All pre-existing conditions are covered from day one.
3. Covers up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days post-hospitalization expenses such as diagnostics and medicines.
4. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country.
5. Services include approximately 1,393 procedures covering all the costs related to treatment, including but not limited to drugs, supplies, diagnostic services, physician's fees, room charges, surgeon charges, OT and ICU charges etc.

6. Public hospitals are reimbursed for the **healthcare services** at par with the private hospitals.

As per the latest economic survey:

1. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) contributed to improvement in many health outcomes in States that implemented the programme.
2. States that joined the PM-JAY, compared to those that did not, experienced greater penetration of health insurance, reduction in infant and child mortality rates, realised improved access and utilisation of family planning services and greater awareness of HIV/AIDS.
3. Across all the States, the proportion of households with health insurance increased by 54% for States that implemented PM-JAY while falling by 10% in States that did not.

2. Prime Ministers Shram Awards

Recently, The Government of India has announced the Prime Minister's Shram Awards (PMSA) for the year 2018.

This year the Awards are given in three categories namely:

1. **Shram Bhushan Awards** which carry a cash prize of Rs.1,00,000/- each,
2. **Shram Vir/Shram Veerangana Awards** which carry a cash prize of Rs. 60,000/- each and
3. **Shram Shree/Shram Devi Awards** which carry a cash prize of Rs.40,000/- each.

About the Awards:

The objective of the Prime Ministers Shram Awards is to recognize the outstanding contributions made by workmen in organizations **both in public and private sector**.

- The Awards will be presented to **the workmen as defined in the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947** and employed in the Departmental Undertakings of the Central and State Governments, Central and State Public Sector Undertakings as also private sector and **having minimum of 500 employees** on roll.

Eligibility:

- These awards are given to the workmen, **who have distinguished record of performance**, devotion to duty of a high order, specific contribution in the field of productivity, proven innovative abilities, presence of mind and exceptional courage.
- These are also given to the workmen **who have made supreme sacrifice of laying down their lives** in the conscientious discharge of their duties.
- Workmen solely engaged in **routine service duties would not be eligible**.

3. Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

Context: The Union Minister of Commerce & Industry chaired a meeting for the review of **the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) initiative of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**.

What is ONDC?

Open Network for Digital Commerce christened ONDC is **globally first-of-its-kind initiative** that aims to **democratise Digital Commerce**, moving it from a platform-centric model to an open-network.

- As UPI is to the digital payment domain, ONDC is to e-commerce in India.
- ONDC will enable, buyers and sellers to be digitally visible and transact through an open network, no matter what platform/application they use.
- ONDC will empower merchants and consumers by breaking silos to form a single network to drive innovation and scale, transforming all businesses from retail goods, food to mobility.

Aims and objectives:

1. ONDC aims at **promoting open networks developed on open-sourced methodology**, using open specifications and open network protocols independent of any specific platform.
2. ONDC is **expected to digitize the entire value chain**, standardize operations, promote inclusion of suppliers, derive efficiencies in logistics and enhance value for consumers.

4. Vehicle scrappage policy

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled **the National Automobile Scrappage Policy**.

1. Old vehicles will have to pass a **fitness test** before re-registration and as per the policy **government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.**
2. As a disincentive, **increased re-registration fees** would be applicable for vehicles 15 years or older from the initial date registration.
3. The state governments may be advised to **offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles** to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles.

Significance:

- The **vehicle scrapping policy** is aimed at creating an eco-system for phasing out unfit and polluting vehicles in an environmentally friendly and safe manner.
- The initiative will promote a circular economy and make the process of economic development more sustainable and environment friendly.
- The policy will also bring in investments of around Rs 10,000 crore and create 35,000 job opportunities.

Issues with the new policy:

1. Limited incentive and poor cost economics for trucks.
2. Lack of addressable volumes for other segments.
3. The potential benefit from scrapping a 15-year-old, entry-level small car will be ₹70,000, whereas its resale value is around ₹95,000. That makes scrapping unattractive.

Need of the hour:

With this background, for the scrappage policy to be seamlessly implemented, we should have a comprehensive plan in terms of removing ELV (End of life vehicles) from the road. Freight transporters need stronger financial support. However, that said, it is important to note that unless old fleet vehicles are off the road, the benefits of implementation of **BSVI** vehicles will not be fully leveraged.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. IPCC's Sixth Assessment report:

Context: Recently, IPCC released its Sixth Assessment Report “Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science”.

- Several Indian Scientists have participated in the preparation of this report.

What is Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)?

The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the **United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** is the sixth in a series of reports intended to assess scientific, technical, and socio-economic information concerning climate change.

- **This report evaluates** the physical science of climate change – looking at the past, present, and future climate.
- It reveals **how human-caused emissions are altering our planet** and what that means for our collective future.

Highlights of Sixth Assessment Report (AR6):

- **Weather and climate events** – such as extreme heat, heavy rainfall, fire conditions, and droughts – are becoming more severe and frequent because of climate change.
- The report finds we are already edging **closer to a 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer world**, and every day emissions rise the prospects for averting the worst impacts of climate change become dimmer.
- **Carbon dioxide** has been and will continue to be the dominant cause of global warming under all greenhouse gas emissions scenarios.
- It says, if greenhouse gas emissions are halved by 2030 and net zero by 2050, global warming can be stopped.
- Also, IPCC report vindicates India's position that historical cumulative emissions are the source of the climate crisis that the World faces today.

Major Concerns:

The report highlights that our climate is rapidly changing due to human influence and is already altering our planet in drastic ways –

- **Arctic Sea ice** is at its lowest level in more than 150 years;
- Sea levels are rising faster than at any time in at least the last 3,000 years; and
- Glaciers are declining at a rate unprecedented in at least 2,000 years.

Need of the hour:

- It is essential that all countries – in particular the major economies – do their part during this critical decade of the 2020s to put the world on a trajectory to keep a 1.5 degrees Celsius limit on warming within reach.
- This is why the United States has committed to a **50-52 percent reduction in emissions from 2005 levels in 2030** and is marshaling the entire federal government to tackle the climate crisis.
- As countries prepare for the **26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow**, this report is a stark reminder that we must let science drive us to action.
- This moment requires world leaders, the private sector, and individuals to act together with urgency and do everything it takes to protect our planet and our future in this decade and beyond.

6. Import of crushed genetically modified (GM) soybean allowed

Context:

The Union government has decided to allow the import of **crushed genetically modified (GM) soybean**, which is a major ingredient of poultry feed.

What necessitated this move?

The **poultry industry** has been crushed by multiple disasters over the last year and a half.

- In January 2020, a false rumour that COVID-19 could be spread by eating chicken meat led to a crash in demand.
- A year later, avian flu cases led to another crash, followed by a crippling rise in the prices of poultry feed.
- Besides, over the last three to four years, soy meal has been available at an average cost of ₹34 to 36/kg. This month, it shot up to ₹96/kg (Soy meal is the main protein ingredient in the feed).

Concerns/criticisms:

1. Environmental activists have raised concerns about the permission given for something derived from a genetically modified plant to enter the human food chain, given that India's regulatory system has yet to approve GM foods.
2. Besides, the 1989 rules of the Environment Protection Act applied not just to GM organisms, but also products and substances thereof.

What are Genetically Modified crops?

- A GM or transgenic crop is a plant that has a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.
- GM crop can contain a gene(s) that has been artificially inserted instead of the plant acquiring it through pollination.

Approval Process for GM crops in India:

- The **Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)** is the apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops.
- Use of the unapproved GM variant can attract a jail term of 5 years and fine of Rs. 1 lakh under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** is the authorised body to regulate the imported crops in India.

Status of GM Soybean and soyabean seeds in India:

India allows the import of GM soybean and canola oil. Import of GM soya bean seeds was so far not approved in India.

7. Open Acreage Licensing Programme

In news In an attempt to boost domestic hydrocarbon production, the petroleum and natural ministry launched the sixth bid round under the liberal Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP).

- Earlier, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the Policy framework on reforms in the exploration and licensing sector for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas.

About Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)

- The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) replacing the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was approved in March 2016.
- The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) along with the National Data Repository (NDR) were launched in June 2017 as the key drivers to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India.
- Under OALP, companies are allowed to carve out areas they want to explore oil and gas in.

- Companies can put in an expression of interest (EOI) for any area throughout the year but such interests are accumulated thrice in a year.
- The areas sought are then offered for bidding.
- This policy is different from the past where the government identified areas and offered them for bidding.

What is Need of the Policy?

- India is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world.
- It is the third largest consumer of petroleum products after the US and China.
- India is heavily dependent on import of crude oil to meet its energy needs.
- Net imports of crude oil have increased from 111.50 metric tons during 2006-07 to 202.85 metric tons during 2015-16.
- In this backdrop, India has set a target to reduce dependence on crude oil imports by 10% by 2022.

What are the Benefits involved?

- Increase in Exploration
- Removal of Red-Tapism

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. National Vehicle Scrappage Policy

The **National Vehicle Scrappage Policy** with an aim to phase out **old and unfit vehicles** in an environment-friendly manner has been launched.

Major Highlights:

- The policy aims to **scrap old, unfit and polluting vehicles** by creating an infrastructure for automated testing of vehicles that have completed the registration period.
- As per law, a **registration certificate** for a passenger vehicle is valid for 15 years from date of issue.
 - For a commercial vehicle, it is valid for a period of 10 years.
- The scrappage policy will come into effect after the expiry of this 10- or 15-year period, and the vehicle will have to undergo a **mandatory fitness test**.
 - A **valid fitness certificate** will be necessary for renewal of registration certificates after 15 years.
 - Fitness test includes **multiple tests** like brake test, engine performance and others.
- It is a **voluntary scheme**; owners of such vehicles will have the option of scrapping their vehicles in a registered vehicle scrapping facility.

When will the policy come into effect?

- **Personal vehicles** that are older than **20 years** will be de-registered from **June 1, 2024**, if they fail the automated fitness test or their registration certificates have not been renewed.
- **Heavy commercial vehicles** older than **15 years** will be de-registered from **April 1, 2023**.

Automated testing stations and registered scrapping facilities:

- Centre has mandated setting up of **automated testing stations** to minimise manual testing of vehicles as per the road map.
 - **Private players** are also encouraged to invest in setting up such stations through PPP route with the state governments.
- **Registered vehicle scrapping facilities** will be set up across the country to promote safe scrapping of the vehicles.
 - Centre plans to set up 50-70 such facilities in the next 4-5 years.

Incentives for scrapping old vehicles:

- The owners of such vehicles will get a **scrap value** equivalent to **4% to 6%** of the ex-showroom price of the **new vehicle** that they would be purchasing.

- There will be **zero registration fees** for new vehicle purchased if the owner shows a certificate of deposit.
- State governments will offer concessions on **motor vehicle tax**.
 - Up to 25% for non-transport vehicles
 - Up to 15% for transport vehicles
- Vehicle manufacturers have been advised to **provide 5% discount** on purchase of new vehicle against certificate of deposit.
- Opting for a new vehicle will also **lower maintenance cost** and increased savings on fuel.

Benefits of the policy:

- **Cheap raw material acquired** from scrapped vehicles would **bring down the price** of vehicles and boost their sales.
- Recycling on a continuous basis can recover **99%** of the materials.
 - Scrap would provide copper, aluminium, steel, plastic and rubber to the industry.
 - This will lead to a **reduction of 40%** in the raw material cost.
- It will **boost manufacturing**, create employment and help in raising the Centre's GST collection.
- The policy will **promote a circular economy**, making the process of economic development more sustainable and environment-friendly.

2. BBV154

Bharat Biotech's **BBV154 Covid Vaccine** is the **first intranasal vaccine** being developed in the country entering into late-stage clinical trials.

This is the first of its kind COVID-19 jab to undergo **human clinical trials** in India.

- BBV154 is an **intranasal** replication-deficient chimpanzee adenovirus SARS-CoV-2 vectored vaccine.
- **Phase 1 Clinical trial** of the vaccine has been completed in age groups ranging ≥ 18 to ≤ 60 years.

3. IndiGau

IndiGau is India's **first Cattle Genomic Chip** for the conservation of pure varieties of indigenous cattle breeds like, Gir, Kankrej, Sahiwal, Ongole etc.

- This **indigenous chip** was developed by scientists of **National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NAIB)**, Hyderabad.
- IndiGau is the **largest cattle chip** of the world and has 11,496 markers (SNPs).

SNP chip:

- SNP chip is a small piece of glass with large number of very **small pits**.
- Each of these hold a **tiny amount of DNA**, which has been extracted from the tissue sample of an animal or plant.
 - This DNA can be read by a **DNA sequence-reading machine**.
- If the cattle breeder wants to get **DNA or genomic information** on an animal, they simply take a hair or other tissue sample, and send it off to be read.
- The **chip conveys the information** like pedigree testing, test for horn/ poll status, and/or traits like growth rate or eating quality.

4. Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill 2021

The Parliament has passed the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill 2021**.

Major Highlights:

- The Bill seeks to amend the **nomenclature of certain tribes** from Arunachal Pradesh mentioned in the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**.
- The Bill seeks to modify **Part-XVIII** of the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.
 - **Part-XVIII** lists 16 tribes of Arunachal, in order: Abor, Aka, Apatani, Nyishi, Galong, Khampti, Khowa, Mishmi [Idu, Taroon], Momba, Any Naga tribes, Sherdukpen, Singpho, Hrusso, Tagin, Khamba and Adi.

What are the changes?

- The Bill corrects the **names of tribes spelt incorrectly**, and adds names of a few tribes that were either named ambiguously or had their parent group named only.

Significance:

- Indigenous nomenclature of tribes has been a **long-standing demand** in Arunachal Pradesh for two reasons:
 - Recognition of individual identity
 - Do away with the ambiguity as a result of errors in their names.

- **Self-identification** is holds deep significance for **small indigenous communities** in the Northeast.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. SonChiraiya

- SonChiraiya is a **brand and logo** for marketing of urban Self-Help Group (SHG) products.
- It was launched by **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**.
- This initiative is a significant step of increasing visibility and global access for the products made by urban SHG women.
- Under the initiative, **variety of professionally packaged and hand-crafted ethnic products will reach to the doorsteps of the customers worldwide**.

6. Rebate of State and Central Taxes and levies (RoSCTL)

The Government has notified the continuation of Scheme for Rebate of State and Central Taxes and levies (RoSCTL) on export of garments and made-ups to enhance competitiveness of these sectors.

Major revisions:

- A mechanism for such revision shall be decided **separately by Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Finance**.
- Government has **decided to continue the RoSCTL w.e.f. 1st January 2021 to 31st March 2024** for apparel/ garments and Made-ups in exclusion of RoDTEP for these Chapters with the rates, subject to review of rates periodically.
- However, **eligibility criteria** under RoSCTL shall **remain unchanged**.
- The other textiles products which are **not covered under the RoSCTL shall be eligible to avail the benefits**, are to be finalised by Department of Commerce.
- The **Scheme shall be implemented by Department of Revenue** with end to end digitization for issuance of transferable Duty Credit Scrip, which will be maintained in an electronic ledger in the Customs system.
- **Duty Credit Scrip** under RoSCTL Scheme shall be issued without insisting on realization of export proceeds.

- Continuation of RoSCTL for Apparel/Garments and Made-ups will make these products **globally competitive** by rebating all embedded taxes/levies which are currently not being rebated under any other mechanism.
- It will ensure a **stable and predictable policy regime** and provide a level playing field to Indian textiles exporters.
- Further, it will **promote start-ups and entrepreneurs to export** and ensure creation of jobs.



Prelims Practice Questions

1) Which of the following site(s) has been recently included in the Ramsar Convention as Wetlands of International Importance?

1. Wadhvana Wetland
2. Sultanpur National Park
3. Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : b

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

- Four more wetlands from India get recognition from the Ramsar Secretariat as Ramsar sites recently.

The sites are:

1. Wadhvana Wetland (Gujarat)
2. Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat)
3. Sultanpur National Park (Haryana)
4. Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary (Haryana)

Sultanpur National Park

- It is located in the state of Haryana and supports more than 220 species of resident, winter migratory and local migratory water birds at critical stages of their life cycles.
- More than ten of these are globally threatened, including the critically endangered sociable lapwing, and the endangered Egyptian Vulture, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Fish Eagle and Black-bellied Tern.

Wadhvana Wetland

- It is located in the state of Gujarat.
- It is internationally important for its birdlife as it provides wintering ground to migratory water birds, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway.
- They include some threatened or near-threatened species such as the endangered Pallas's fish-Eagle, the vulnerable Common Pochard, and the near-threatened Dalmatian Pelican, Grey-headed Fish-eagle and Ferruginous Duck.

Thane Creek

- The biodiversity-rich Thane Creek, which is one of the largest creeks in Asia receiving huge congregation of birds, has been proposed for Ramsar site designation.

At present, Maharashtra has two Ramsar sites

1. Nandur Madhmeshwar in Nashik
2. Lonar crater in Buldhana district

2. With reference to India's biodiversity, Ceylon frogmouth, Coppersmith barbet, Gray-chinned minivet and White- throated redstart are

- a. Birds
- b. Primates
- c. Reptiles
- d. Amphibians

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Ceylon Frogmouth also known as Sri Lanka Frogmouth is a nocturnal Small Bird from Sri Lanka.
- Coppersmith Barbet is an Asian barbet.
- Gray-Chinned Minivet is a bird from the Campephagidae family.
- White throated redstart is a species of bird in the family Muscicapidae. It is found in Nepal, Bhutan, central China and far northern areas of Myanmar and Northeast India.

3. Which of the following is/are part of India's investments in Afghanistan?

1. Salma Dam
2. Zaranj-Delaram highway
3. The Afghan Parliament in Kabul
4. Restoration of the Stor Palace project

Select the correct option from below:

- a. 1 & 2
- b. 1, 2 & 3
- c. 2, 3 & 4
- d. All of the Above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Salma Dam is currently known as the Afghan-India Friendship Dam.
- Zaranj-Delaram highway project also known as Route 606 was totally financed by India.
- In 2016, the Afghanistan's parliament relocated to a new building of Indian construction in Kabul.
- Stor Palace (also known as the Qasre Storay) was restored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in collaboration with the governments of Afghanistan and India.

4. With respect to the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2021, consider the following statements:

1. The Bill empowers the states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes.
2. This list must be made by law, and may differ from the central list.

Which of the given statements above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty Seventh Amendment) 2021 Bill

- The bill amends this to provide that the **President may notify** the list of socially and educationally backward classes **only for purposes of the central government**.
- This central list will be prepared and maintained by the central government.
- The Bill enables **states and union territories** to prepare **their own list of socially and educationally** backward classes.
- This list must be made by law, and **may differ** from the central list.

5. 'Brasilia Declaration' led to the establishment of:

- a. IBSA
- b. BRICS

- c. SAARC
- d. SCO

Answer: a

Explanation:

- IBSA brings together India, Brazil and South Africa.
- In 2003, the foreign ministers of these three countries met at Brasilia and issued the Brasilia Declaration which led to the establishment of IBSA.

6. Operation Blue Freedom, sometimes seen in the news recently, is associated with?

- a. India's scientific expedition program to Antarctica under the Mission Sakthi
- b. An expedition exercise till Siachen Glacier by People with disabilities from across the country
- c. A campaign launched by the Ministry of Environment to attain blue flag tag for India's beaches
- d. An exercise launched by the Ministry of Fisheries to eliminate ghostnets and bottom trawling fishing

Answer : b

Operation Blue Freedom

- Recently, the Government of India has permitted a team of people with disabilities to scale Siachen Glacier.
- Operation Blue Freedom is an expedition till Siachen Glacier undertaken by the People with disabilities from across the country to create a new World Record for the largest team of people with disabilities to reach the world's highest battlefield.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Assess the role of Science and Technology in boosting the productivity and income of farmers in India. (150 words).

Approach

- Discuss the areas where use of science and technology has made an impact on agriculture in India
- Discuss the problems that have arisen due to latest technologies
- Mention the newer technologies that are helping farmers currently

2Q. What do you understand by 'frontier technologies'? Discuss the possible impact of frontier technologies on developing countries like India. (250 words)

Approach

- Explain the meaning of Frontier Technologies.
- Discuss the impact of such technologies on India.
- Conclude suitably.

