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Headlines:

- **Public Health Financing: Spending Better for Better Health Outcomes**
- **Urban Infrastructure Safety: Strengthening Structural Resilience in India**
- **Drug-Free Youth: A Foundation for Viksit Bharat**
- **India's Lepidoptera Diversity: A Milestone in Biodiversity Documentation**
- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC): Balancing Equality, Justice and Diversity**



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1. Public Health Financing: Spending Better for Better Health Outcomes

GS Paper: GS-II – Health, Governance, Welfare Schemes & Social Sector Development

Why in News

A recent analysis on global public health financing highlighted that declining Development Assistance for Health (DAH), rising public debt, and underutilisation of health budgets are limiting the capacity of developing countries to strengthen public health systems, underscoring the need for more efficient and outcome-oriented health spending.

Key Highlights

Global Scenario

- Development Assistance for Health (DAH) has declined after peaking during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Major donor countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, have reduced foreign health assistance.
- Rising public debt has constrained fiscal space for health expenditure, particularly in developing countries.

Challenges in Public Health Financing

- **Poor Budget Execution:** Delays in fund release, administrative bottlenecks and weak implementation reduce the effectiveness of health expenditure.
- **Skewed Spending Pattern:** Greater emphasis on secondary and tertiary curative care than on primary and preventive healthcare.
- **Limited Fiscal Space:** Rising debt servicing leaves fewer resources for health and other social sectors.
- **Epidemiological Transition:** The growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and ageing populations is increasing long-term healthcare expenditure.

Why Efficient Health Spending Matters

- Improves health outcomes while ensuring optimum utilisation of limited fiscal resources.
- Reduces Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) and prevents medical impoverishment.
- Public health is a merit good that generates significant positive externalities, justifying greater public investment.
- Healthy populations enhance human capital, workforce productivity, educational outcomes, and inclusive economic growth.
- Well-directed investments strengthen preparedness against future pandemics and public health emergencies.

Focus on Preventive Healthcare

- Prioritising primary and preventive healthcare reduces disease burden, lowers treatment costs, and strengthens community-level health resilience.
- Greater investment in vaccination, sanitation, nutrition, disease surveillance, and health promotion yields higher long-term health and economic benefits.
- Preventive healthcare is central to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which ensures access to quality healthcare without financial hardship.
- It also contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 – Good Health and Well-being.

Key Indian Initiatives

- National Health Policy (NHP), 2017 aims to increase public health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP.
- National Health Mission (NHM) strengthens primary healthcare and public health infrastructure.
- Ayushman Bharat comprises PM-JAY and Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs) to expand affordable and comprehensive healthcare.
- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) promotes an integrated digital health ecosystem for efficient service delivery.
- Improving public health advances the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 47), which directs the State to raise the level of nutrition, standard of living, and public health.

Way Forward

- Improve budget planning, timely fund release, procurement systems, transparency, accountability, and public finance management to enhance expenditure efficiency.
- Promote data-driven planning, digital health technologies, and evidence-based policymaking to improve health outcomes.
- Strengthen the capacity of State and local governments for effective implementation while gradually increasing public health expenditure to build a resilient and equitable healthcare system.

2. Urban Infrastructure Safety: Strengthening Structural Resilience in India

GS Paper: GS-II – Governance & Urban Local Bodies, GS-III – Infrastructure, Disaster Management & Sustainable Urbanisation

Why in News

The collapse of a residential building in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, despite being identified as structurally unsafe, has once again highlighted concerns over ageing urban infrastructure, weak enforcement of building safety regulations, and inadequate municipal capacity.

Key Highlights

Urban Infrastructure Challenges

- **Ageing Buildings:** Many urban structures have exceeded their design life and require periodic structural audits and rehabilitation.
- **Weak Enforcement:** Delays in implementing evacuation, demolition and redevelopment orders increase disaster risks.
- **Rapid Urbanisation:** Unplanned urban growth has outpaced municipal planning, infrastructure maintenance and regulatory oversight.
- **Climate Risks:** Heavy rainfall and extreme weather events intensify structural vulnerabilities, particularly in densely populated cities.

Governance Issues

- Limited financial and technical capacity of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) affects infrastructure monitoring and maintenance.
- Inadequate coordination among municipal authorities, developers and enforcement agencies delays corrective action.
- Lack of affordable rehabilitation and transit housing discourages residents from vacating unsafe buildings.

Need for Urban Resilience

- Promote Structural Health Monitoring (SHM), GIS-based asset mapping and digital building records for continuous safety assessment.
- Conduct periodic structural audits of public buildings, bridges and ageing residential structures.
- Integrate climate-resilient infrastructure and disaster risk reduction into urban planning.
- Strengthen enforcement of the National Building Code (NBC), 2016, and improve compliance with building safety norms.

Way Forward

- Enhance the financial and institutional capacity of Urban Local Bodies in line with the 74th Constitutional Amendment.
- Expand urban renewal, redevelopment and affordable rehabilitation programmes.
- Encourage community participation, transparent governance and technology-driven monitoring to build safe, resilient and sustainable cities, contributing to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

3. Drug-Free Youth: A Foundation for Viksit Bharat

GS Paper: GS-II – Health, Social Justice & Government Policies | GS-III – Internal Security

Why in News

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Nasha Mukt Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan, a nationwide campaign to mobilise youth and society against substance abuse and promote a drug-free India as a cornerstone of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Key Highlights

Drug Abuse: A Multi-dimensional Challenge

- Drug abuse is a public health, social, economic and internal security challenge with far-reaching consequences.
- Key Drivers: Peer pressure, unemployment, easy availability of narcotic substances, social media influence, mental health issues, and cross-border trafficking contribute to rising substance abuse.
- It adversely affects physical and mental health, educational attainment, workforce productivity, family stability and social cohesion.
- Drug trafficking fuels organised crime, money laundering and cross-border terrorism, and is increasingly linked to narco-terrorism, illegal arms trade, and financing of extremist networks.

Importance of a Drug-Free Youth

- A healthy and skilled youth population is essential to harness India's demographic dividend and realise the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.
- Preventing substance abuse strengthens human capital, enhances productivity, and supports inclusive socio-economic development.
- It also promotes social responsibility, civic values and nation-building, enabling youth to contribute meaningfully to national progress.

Government Initiatives

- Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA): Focuses on awareness, prevention, counselling and rehabilitation.
- Nasha Mukh Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan: Encourages sustained community participation and youth-led awareness initiatives.
- National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR): Supports preventive education, treatment, rehabilitation and capacity building.
- Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985: Provides the legal framework to curb illicit drug production, trafficking and consumption.
- The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) coordinates national efforts against drug trafficking and organised narcotics networks.

Constitutional & Global Perspective

- Article 47 of the Constitution directs the State to improve public health and endeavour to prohibit intoxicating drugs except for medicinal purposes.
- Addressing substance abuse advances SDG 3.5, which aims to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse.
- India is a signatory to the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961), the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971), and the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).

Way Forward

- Adopt a whole-of-society approach involving families, schools, communities, healthcare institutions and law enforcement agencies.
- Strengthen awareness, counselling, de-addiction services, rehabilitation, skill development and employment opportunities for recovering individuals.
- Enhance border surveillance, intelligence-sharing and inter-agency coordination to disrupt drug trafficking networks.
- Promote sports, cultural activities, life-skills education, mental health support and community-based awareness programmes to reduce the demand for drugs and build a resilient, healthy and productive youth population.

4. India's Lepidoptera Diversity: A Milestone in Biodiversity Documentation

GS Paper: GS-III – Environment, Biodiversity & Conservation

Why in News

Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have published the Catalogue of Lepidoptera (Butterflies & Moths) of India in the peer-reviewed journal Zootaxa, documenting 13,703 species and providing the country's first comprehensive and updated inventory of butterflies and moths.



Of the 13,703 species of lepidoptera found in India, 12,286 are moths and 1,417 are butterflies. M. PERIASAMY

Key Highlights

India's Lepidoptera Diversity

- India is home to 13,703 species of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), representing 8.25% of the world's known Lepidoptera diversity.
- **The catalogue records:**
 - 1,417 butterfly species
 - 12,286 moth species
- **These species belong to:**
 - 3,705 genera
 - 240 subfamilies
 - 102 families
 - 31 superfamilies
 - The catalogue was prepared after 12 years of field surveys, museum curation and taxonomic verification.
- **Ecological Significance**
 - Butterflies and moths are important pollinators, supporting both natural ecosystems and agriculture.
 - They act as bioindicators, reflecting changes in ecosystem health and climate.
 - Their larvae contribute to nutrient cycling and food webs, while adults serve as prey for birds, bats and other insectivores.

- Nocturnal moths complement butterflies by providing night-time pollination, enhancing ecosystem resilience.
- **Significance of the Catalogue**
 - Bridges over a century-old taxonomic gaps in documenting India's Lepidoptera diversity.
 - Provides a baseline database for biodiversity assessment, ecological monitoring and conservation planning.
 - Strengthens India's position among the world's megadiverse countries with a scientifically validated inventory of insect diversity.
 - Supports species identification, environmental impact assessments and evidence-based policymaking.
- **Conservation Concerns**
 - Habitat loss, deforestation, pesticide use, climate change, invasive species and light pollution threaten Lepidoptera populations.
 - Declining pollinator diversity can adversely affect ecosystem stability and agricultural productivity.
- **Way Forward**
 - Strengthen habitat conservation, ecological restoration and pollinator-friendly landscapes.
 - Promote long-term biodiversity monitoring, taxonomic research and citizen science initiatives.
 - Integrate pollinator conservation into sustainable agriculture and implement the National Biodiversity Action Plan in line with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

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5. Uniform Civil Code (UCC): Balancing Equality, Justice and Diversity

GS Paper: GS-II – Constitution, Governance & Social Justice

Why in News

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has once again come into focus following renewed public and policy discussions on implementing a common civil law to promote gender justice, legal uniformity and constitutional values.

Key Highlights

What is the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?

- A Uniform Civil Code seeks to replace religion-based personal laws governing matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and succession with a common set of civil laws applicable to all citizens, irrespective of religion.

Constitutional Framework

- Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy) directs the State to endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens.
- It complements the constitutional principles of equality (Article 14), non-discrimination (Article 15) and gender justice, while balancing freedom of religion (Articles 25–28).
- The Supreme Court, in several judgments, has highlighted the desirability of a UCC while emphasising that its implementation must remain consistent with constitutional values and principles.

Need for UCC

- Promotes gender equality by eliminating discriminatory provisions in personal laws.
- Ensures equal protection before the law and strengthens constitutional morality.
- Simplifies the legal system by reducing inconsistencies across multiple personal laws.
- Fosters national integration through a common civil framework while respecting India's diversity.
- Reinforces the constitutional ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in the Preamble.

Challenges

- Concerns over the protection of religious freedom and cultural practices.
- Apprehensions regarding the possible erosion of cultural and religious diversity.
- Concerns among some minority communities about uniformity versus equality.
- India's plural legal traditions and customary practices make consensus-building a complex process.

Recent Developments

- Uttarakhand became the first State after Independence to enact and implement a Uniform Civil Code.
- Goa continues to follow a common civil code (Goa Civil Code) inherited from the Portuguese Civil Code and is often cited as an example of a uniform civil law framework in India.
- The 22nd Law Commission invited public views to facilitate wider consultations on the UCC.

Way Forward

- Adopt a phased, inclusive and consensus-based approach through extensive stakeholder consultations and public awareness.
- Reform discriminatory provisions in personal laws while safeguarding legitimate cultural and religious practices.
- Balance Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, and India's pluralistic traditions to ensure gender justice, equality and constitutional harmony.

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