INDEX - PIB SUMMARY (JANUARY 2019)

Cabinet apprised of NHM's progress

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has been apprised of the Progress and new initiatives under National Health Mission (NHM) and the Decisions of the Empowered Programme Committee and Mission Steering Group of NHM.

Salient Features -
- The outcomes achieved under the NHM during the last five years and during the year 2017-18 are -
- Decline by 2.7% in the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to 130 during 2014-16 from 178 during 2010-12;
- Decline in the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to 34 in 2016 as compared to 44 in 2011. The annual rate of decline of IMR between 2015 and 2018 was 8.1%;
- Decline in the Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) to 39 in 2016 from 55 in 2011. The U5MR annual rate of decline during 2015-16 was 9.3%;
- Decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) to 2.3% in 2016. The percentage annual compound rate of decline in TFR during 2011-16 has been observed as 1.7%; and

Further various diseases-related health indicators have also shown improvement, such as -
- In respect of Malaria, the Annual Parasite Incidence (API) declined to 0.84 in 2016 from 1.10 in 2011. In 2017 malaria incidence went down by 30% and deaths due to malaria decreased by 70%;
- The incidence of Tuberculosis (TB) per 1 lakh population has been reduced to 204 in 2017, from 234 in 2013. Incidence of TB per lakh population has been reduced to 204 in 2017 from 211 in 2016. Mortality due to TB per lakh population for India reduced to 21 in 2017 from 32 in 2016;
- The target of prevalence of leprosy <1/one lakh population has been achieved nationally. The number of districts that achieved elimination of leprosy has increased from 554 in 2017 to 571 by March 2018;
- Incidence of Kala Azar was to reduce it to less than 1 case per 10000 population in all blocks. The number of endemic blocks with prevalence of more than 1 case per 10000 population has been reduced to 72 in 2017, from 94 in 2016; and
- Reduction of diseases attributable to Tobacco use, like 4 major Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) namely Cancers, diabetes, Stroke and Cardiovascular diseases, and chronic lung diseases has been achieved through measures for bringing down prevalence of tobacco use by 6% average points, to 28.6% in 2016-17 from 34.6% in 2009-10.

Merger of banks

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the scheme of amalgamation for amalgamating Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank,

with Bank of Baroda as the transferee bank and Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank as transferor banks.

Benefit -
- The amalgamation will be the first-ever three-way consolidation of banks in India, with the amalgamated bank being India's second largest Public Sector Bank.
- The amalgamation will help create a strong globally competitive bank with economies of scale and enable realisation of wide-ranging synergies.
- Leveraging of networks, low-cost deposits and subsidiaries of the three banks has the potential of yielding significant synergies for positioning the consolidated entity for substantial rise in customer base, market reach, operational efficiency, wider bouquet of products and services, and improved access for customers.

Details -
- Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank are transferor banks and BoB is transferee bank.
- The scheme shall come into force on 1.4.2019.

Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme for the Period 2017-18 to 2019-2020 with budget outlay of Rs.1160 crore as recommended by EFC.

Features -
- During 12th FYP period, in rationalization exercise undertaken in consultation with Ministry of Finance and NITI Aayog, the eight schemes were brought under the umbrella scheme of Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram as sub-schemes.
- This has helped in achieving better synergies between the Schemes and thereby, improves their effectiveness and help in achieving better outcomes with the available resources.
- The Scheme beneficiaries are the youth in the age-group of 15-29 years, in line with the definition of 'youth' in the National Youth Policy, 2014.
- In case of programme components specifically meant for the adolescents, the age-group is 10-19 years.

Following are eight sub-schemes under Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram:
1. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan(NYKS);
2. National Youth Corps (NYC);
3. National Programme for Youth & Adolescent Development (NPYAD);
4. International Cooperation;
5. Youth Hostels (YH);
6. Assistance to Scouting & Guiding Organizations;
7. National Discipline Scheme (NDS); and
8. National Young Leaders Programme (NYLP).

Background -

The Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme is an ongoing Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and has been continuing since 12th Five Year Plan. The Scheme aims to develop the personality and leadership qualities of the youth and to engage them in nation building activities.

DNA Technology Regulation Bill, 2019

The Lok Sabha has passed "The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill - 2019".

Need -

The Bill has been formulated recognizing the need for regulation of the use and application of Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) technology, for establishing identity of missing persons, victims, offenders, under trials and unknown deceased persons.

Purpose -
- The purpose of this Bill is to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.
- The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.
- By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in this country, there is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable, and furthermore that the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.

Components -
The key components of this Bill include:
- establishment of a DNA Regulatory Board;
- accreditation of DNA laboratories undertaking DNA testing, analysing, etc.;
- establishment of the National and Regional DNA Data Banks, as envisaged in the Bill, will assist in forensic investigations.

Benefit -
- This will aid in scientific upgradation and streamlining of the DNA testing activities in the country with appropriate inputs from the DNA Regulatory Board which would be set up for the purpose.
- The Bill will add value in empowering the criminal justice delivery system by enabling the application of DNA evidence, which is considered the **gold standard** in crime investigations.

Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019

Lok Sabha has passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019. The Bill seeks to facilitate acquisition of citizenship by six identified minority communities namely **Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis** from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who came to India before **31st December 2014**.

Details -
- The proposed amendment will make these persecuted migrants eligible to apply for citizenship.
- Citizenship will be given to them only after due scrutiny and recommendation of district authorities and the State Government.
- The minimum residency period for citizenship is being reduced from existing 12 years under the present law to 7 years.

National Clean Air Programme

The government has announced the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). This is the first ever effort in the country to frame a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.

The programme will not be notified under the Environment Protection Act or any other Act to create a firm mandate with a strong legal back up for cities and regions to implement NCAP in a time bound manner for effective reduction.

Key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):
- **Achieve a national-level target** of 20-30% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by between 2017 and 2024.
- **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) will execute this nation-wide programme** in consonance with the section 162 (b) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1986.
- **The programme has been launched with an initial budget of ₹300 crore** for the first two years.
- **The plan includes 102 non-attainment cities**, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.
- **Non-attainment cities are those** which have been consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. These include Delhi, Varanasi, Bhopal, Kolkata, Noida, Muzaffarpur, and Mumbai.
- As part of the programme, **the Centre also plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India**. At least 4,000 monitors are needed across the country, instead of the existing 101 real-time air quality (AQ) monitors, according to an analysis.
- **The plan proposes a three-tier system**, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards.

- **It also proposes state-level plans** of e-mobility in the two-wheeler sector, rapid augmentation of charging infrastructure, stringent implementation of BS-VI norms, boosting public transportation system, and adoption of third-party audits for polluting industries.
- **Various committees:** The national plan has proposed setting up an apex committee under environment minister, a steering committee under-secretary (environment) and a monitoring committee under a joint secretary. There would be project monitoring committees at the state-level with scientists and trained personnel.

Gandhi Peace Prize(s) announced

The Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015,2016,2017 and 2018 has been conferred on the following

1. Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari for the year 2015 for their contribution in Rural Development, Education , Development of natural resources.
2. For 2016 jointly to Akshaya Patra Foundation for its contribution in providing mid-day meals to millions of children across India and Sulabh International for its contribution in improving the condition of sanitation in India and emancipation of manual scavengers.
3. Ekal Abhiyan Trust for the year 2017 for their contribution in providing Education for Rural and Tribal Children in remote areas pan India, Rural Empowerment, Gender and Social Equality
4. Shri Yohei Sasakawa for the year 2018 for his contribution in Leprosy Eradication in India and across the world.

Committee for selection -
Committee comprises of the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of the largest Opposition Party and a Member of Parliament.

UNNATI Programme launched

UNNATI (Unispace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training) is a training programme of ISRO.

Details -
- UNNATI, a capacity building programme on Nanosatellite development, is an initiative by ISRO to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE-50).
- The programme provides opportunities to the participating developing countries to strengthen in assembling, integrating and testing of Nanosatellite.

Diffo Bridge (for Prelims)

- Raksha Mantri Smt Nirmala Sitharaman recently inaugurated the 426.60 metre long Pre-Stressed Concrete Box Girder type bridge over Diffo river on Roing-Koron-Paya road in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Dedicating the bridge to the nation, the Raksha Mantri praised the commendable work being done by Project Udayak, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in this region.

Exercise SEA-VIGIL

Ten years after "26/11", the Indian Navy commenced the largest coastal defence exercise off the Indian coast.

About Exercise SEA VIGIL -
Exercise SEA VIGIL, a first of its kind, is being undertaken along the entire 7516.6 km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone of India and is involving all the 13 coastal States and Union Territories along with all maritime stakeholders, including the fishing and coastal communities.

Objective -
- Exercise SEA VIGIL aims to comprehensively and holistically validate the efficacy of the measures taken since '26/11'.
- Seaward monitoring during the exercise will entail patrolling off coast, in Offshore Development Areas and off our islands by the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard, supported by the State Marine Police.
- Closer coast, strategic assets, ports, Single Point Moorings (SPMs) will be patrolled by designated agencies.
- Seaward monitoring will also entail inputs from technical means, including intelligence sources. Shore-based monitoring will entail enhanced vigil by the State Police along the coast; monitoring of fish landing centres by state fisheries departments; as also monitoring of port areas by respective port authorities.
- The exercise aims to simultaneously activate the coastal security mechanism across all States and Union Territories. The exercise will cover a wide frontage covering for the first time the entire coast of India, including island territories.
- The exercise will also go deeper, being spread over seaward, coastal, and hinterland areas. Evaluation of critical areas and processes, including inter-agency coordination, information sharing and technical surveillance will be undertaken. Multi Agency Audit and identification of gaps, shortfalls and incorporation of lessons learnt into SOPs are also the desired outcomes.

GSTAT

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the creation of National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT).

The National Bench of the Appellate Tribunal shall be situated at New Delhi. GSTAT shall be presided over by its President and shall consist of one Technical Member (Centre) and one Technical Member (State).

Details -
- Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal is the forum of second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- The appeals against the orders in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is common under the Central as well as State GST Acts.
- Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.

First prize for Kisan Gandhi tableaux

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) was awarded First Prize for its Tableau, 'Kisan Gandhi' in the Republic Day Parade - 2019.

Details -
- The ICAR tableau displayed the importance of dairy farming, use of indigenous breeds and livestock based organic agriculture for rural prosperity.
- The ICAR tableau "Kisan Gandhi" portrayed the Gandhiji's vision to improve agriculture and livestock for the prosperity of rural communities.
- To gain more insight, he attended a training program on dairy farming for fifteen days in 1927 at Bangalore Centre of the ICAR - National Dairy Research Institute.
- He also visited and appreciated the 'Indore method' of composting at the Institute of Plant Industry, Indore in 1935.

India and OECD signs PISA

What is PISA?
- PISA is a triennial international survey (every three years) which aims to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.
- Students are assessed in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving.
- Participation in PISA allows benchmarking performance against a wide range of countries.
- PISA uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. Test items are adapted to the local context and language, pilot tested and validated before being used for the test.
- OECD have agreed to contextualize the questions for Indian students.

Features -

Following are some of the important features of India's participation in PISA -

- Schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh will participate.
- Within the country (or specific geography to be covered in case of large countries), PISA covers a sample of 15-year-old students representing all forms of schooling i.e. public, private, private aided etc.
- PISA is a **competency based assessment** which unlike content-based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies. It would lead to recognition and acceptability of Indian students and prepare them for the global economy in the 21st century.
- Learnings from participation in PISA will help to introduce competency based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning. The CBSE and NCERT will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
- More than 80 countries, including 44 middle-income countries, have participated in the assessment since the first round of testing in 2000. Next round of PISA is going to be held in 2021.
- The list of registered countries includes Brazil, China (certain areas like Shanghai and Beijing) and countries from South-East Asia like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.