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DAILY NEWS DIARY

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FOR PRELIMS AND MAINS

Warm Greetings.

- DnD aims to provide every day news analysis in sync with the UPSC pattern.
- It is targeted at UPSC – Prelims & Mains.
- Daily articles are provided in the form of Question and Answers
- To have a bank of mains questions.
- And interesting to read.
- Providing precise information that can be carried straight to the exam, rather than over dumping.

Enjoy reading.

THE HINDU - TH
INDIAN EXPRESS - IE
BUSINESS LINE - BL
ECONOMIC TIMES - ET
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ESSAY PAPER

Editorial

Q) Critically examine PM POSHAN scheme reach out.

Background: The approval of the PM POSHAN scheme by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs until 2025-26 comes at a critical time when real income declines and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the ability of families to ensure good nutrition.

Findings: The findings in Phase I of the NFHS-5 for 22 States and Union Territories in December 2020 were shocking:

- Childhood stunting rose in 13 States.
- There was high prevalence of anaemia among children and women.
- Wasting was a serious concern in 12 States.
- The slippage over the previous survey period exposes the worsening scourge of malnutrition.
- Threatening to deprive millions of children of a fully productive adult life.

It will take a serious effort to address this hidden crisis, backed by strong budgetary

Cabinet Approves

PM POSHAN SHakti Nirman

WITH CENTRAL OUTLAY OF
₹54,061.73 CRORE FOR NEXT 5 YEARS
2021-22 TO 2025-26

Ensuring Nutrition, Encouraging Education

Areas of special focus

- Encouragement to **Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs)** and **Women Self-Help Groups** in the implementation of PM POSHAN scheme to support objectives under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
- Provision for **supplementary nutrition** in aspirational & tribal districts and districts with high prevalence of anemia.
- Cooking competitions** will be encouraged at all levels to promote ethnic cuisines and culture in line with **#Vocal4Local**.

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commitment.

Measures: The centrally supported hot meal programme in Government and Government-aided schools, covering 11.8 crore children, will be supplemented with nutritional elements in identified aspirational districts and areas with high anaemia. The scheme, which is proposed to be extended to pre-primary children, provides for social audit, creation of school nutritional gardens to source fresh produce, involvement of farmer-producer organisations as providers, and lays emphasis on local food traditions. While these are positive features, momentum towards eradicating malnutrition hinges crucially on annual budgetary outlays and proof of POSHAN's working will lie in measurable outcomes.

PM POSHAN: Support for the PM POSHAN, which the Government says has been approved over the five-year period at ₹1,30,794 crore, including ₹31,733 crore from States and UTs, must remain elastic. While some child growth metrics such as stunting require a longer window to measure, problems such as anaemia and low weight lend themselves to speedy amelioration.

- The Government must demonstrate that Saksham Anganwadi-Mission POSHAN 2.0, which amalgamates the POSHAN Abhiyan and schemes covering anganwadis, crèches and adolescent girls, is fiscally stronger than its erstwhile component parts.
- There must be a meaningful increase in the current Budget estimate over the combined past outlay for the subsumed individual schemes.
- On nutritional planning, the renewed plan should introduce a greater diversity of diets that compensates for micronutrient and protein deficiency.
- Strong supplementation of nutrition at school, in the community, and at childcare centres is critical at a time when criticism of food inflation has met with a tone-deaf response, and pandemic-induced income declines have depressed essential consumption.

Conclusion: The lower offtake of foodgrains for the noon meal scheme during the pandemic over the previous year and patchy food distribution mechanisms in many States should set alarm bells ringing. The future of a generation of Indians is at stake.

Q) Political parties are extra constitutional, but they are breathing air of the political system. Explain?

Background: A political party is an organised group of citizens who hold common views on governance and act as a political unit that seeks to obtain control of government with a view to further the agenda and policy they profess. They are indispensable links between the people and the representative machinery of government. Political parties maintain a continuous connection between the people and those who represent them either in government or in the opposition.

Political parties have extra-legal growth in almost every democratic country. The American Constitution does not presume the existence of political parties. In Britain too, political parties

are still unknown to the law. Nonetheless, Sir Ivor Jennings, in *The British Constitution*, opined that “a realistic survey of the British Constitution today must begin and end with parties and discuss them at length in the middle”. Similarly, political parties in India are extra-constitutional, but they are the breathing air of the political system.

The German model

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949) gives constitutional status to political parties. Article 21 of the Basic Law deals with their status, rights, duties and functions. It provides:

(1) Political parties shall participate in the formation of the political will of the people. They may be freely established. Their internal organisation must conform to democratic principles. They must publicly account for their assets and for the sources and use of their funds.

(2) Parties that, by reason of their aims or the behaviour of their adherents, seek to undermine or abolish the free democratic basic order or to endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany shall be unconstitutional...

(3) The Federal Constitutional Court shall rule on the question of unconstitutionality...

(4) Details shall be regulated by federal laws.” The German model of constitutionalising political parties is more desirable for India than the U.S. and the U.K. models. Section 29A (5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 is the only major statutory provision dealing with political parties in India. It orders that a political party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, and to the principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy, and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

Political parties in developed nations maintain high levels of internal democracy. In the U.K, the Conservative Party has the National Conservative Convention as its top body. It has a Central Council and an Executive Committee. The Central Council elects its President, a Chairman and Vice Chairmen at its annual meeting. It also elects an Executive Committee which meets once a month. In the U.S., both the Democratic and the Republican Party have the National Committee as their top decision-making body. The National Committee plays an important role in the presidential election and agenda setting.

Indian Constitution and Co-operative Societies:

The Indian Constitution is the one of the longest Constitutions in the world. It even elaborately deals with the co-operative societies. The right to form co-operative societies is a fundamental right under Article 19 (1)(c), but the right to form political parties is not. It is astonishing that such

a meticulous Constitution overlooked political parties, the vital players in the political system, for constitutional regulation. Most of the parties are openly caste- or religious-based. Their finances are dubious and opaque. Almost all the parties — the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, the Indian Union Muslim League, etc. — are family fiefdoms. The Congress high command is only a euphemism for the Gandhi family. There are no periodical in-party elections in Indian parties except in a few like the CPI(M).

Conclusion: Political parties are the agents of democracy and safety valves in the political system. They desperately need reform. Hence, it is high time to constitutionalise political parties to ensure in-party democracy, to impart transparency in their finances, and to de-communalise them.

GS-2

❖ Governance

Q) Asses the revamped versions of the SBM and AMRUT.

Background: The revamped versions of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch, would include convergence with the corresponding missions for rural areas and outcome-based funding for cities.

SBM and AMRUT: The SBM-U 2.0 and AMRUT 2.0 aim at “saturation”, while the first five-year iterations of the schemes launched in 2014 and 2015 respectively focused on “transformation”, MHUA said.

- SBM-U focused on construction of toilets and making cities open defecation-free (ODF), SBM-U 2.0 would aim to make the facilities better, reclaim all landfills and take processing of municipal solid waste to 100% from the present 70%, the official said.
- Similarly, AMRUT 2.0 would aim to provide universal coverage of water supply to all 4,378 statutory towns, an increase from the goal of covering 500 cities under AMRUT.

The official said the Ministry would collaborate with the Jal Shakti Ministry to ensure convergence with phase-II of SBM-Rural and Jal Jeevan Mission for areas such as villages on the outskirts of cities that have both urban and rural features.

In a statement, the Prime Minister’s Office said that the two missions had been designed to make cities “garbage free” and “water secure”, for which outlays of ₹1.41 lakh crore for SBM-U 2.0 and ₹2.87 lakh crore for AMRUT 2.0 had been proposed.

Conclusion:

According to the Ministry's data, 66.86 lakh individual household toilets and 6.40 lakh seats in community toilets had been constructed under SBM-U. While 4,371 cities had been declared open defecation-free, 4,316 of them had been certified so far.

❖ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**Q) Hidden debt rising for partners of China's BRI plan. Comment.**

Background: A new study has found under-reported debts to the tune of \$385 billion in projects carried out in dozens of countries under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with a rise in "hidden" debt on account of an increasing number of deals struck not directly between governments but structured through often opaque arrangements with a range of financing institutions.

Debt burdens:

The study by Aid Data, a development research lab at the College of William & Mary in the U.S., found that "Chinese de

bt burdens are substantially larger than research institutions, credit rating agencies, or intergovernmental organisations with surveillance responsibilities previously understood" and "42 countries now have levels of public debt exposure to China in excess of 10% of GDP."

The total debt, the study added, was "systematically under-reported to the World Bank's Debtor Reporting System (DRS) because, in many cases, central government institutions in LMICs [low- and middle-income countries] are not the primary borrowers responsible for repayment".

It estimated that the average government "is under-reporting its actual and potential repayment obligations to China by an amount that is equivalent to 5.8% of its GDP" and "collectively, these under-reported debts are worth approximately \$385 billion."

The report studied 13,427 projects across 165 countries worth \$843 billion, in the time period from 2000 to 2017, and examined how President Xi Jinping's BRI plan, launched in 2013, has changed China's overseas lending.

The big difference between China and other prominent sources of overseas financing was that Chinese banks have used "debt rather than aid to establish a dominant position in the international development finance market". Since the introduction of the BRI, China "maintained

a 31- to-1 ratio of loans to grants and a 9-to-1 ratio of Other Official Flows (OOF) to Official Development Assistance (ODA)”, although Chinese agencies sometimes do not differentiate between loans and grants in public statements of financial assistance. The report found the average loan from China has a 4.2% interest rate, a grace period of less than two years, and a maturity length of less than 10 years.

Biggest recipients

From 2000 to 2017, Iraq (\$8.5 billion), North Korea (\$7.17 billion) and Ethiopia (\$6.57) were the biggest recipients of ODA, while Russia (\$151.8 billion), Venezuela (\$ 81.96 billion) and Angola (\$50.47 billion) were the biggest recipients of Chinese loans. India ranked 23rd in the list of top recipients of Chinese loans from 2000 to 2017, receiving \$8.86 billion, according to the report.

What has, however, led to many countries, such as Nepal and Sri Lanka in South Asia, turning to Chinese loans at higher interest rates is the lack of financing options elsewhere for infrastructure projects.

Scandals, corruption

The report found that Chinese institutions use collateralisation to mitigate risk, for instance with loans collateralised against future commodity export receipts to minimise repayment risk, or later priced at higher interest rates, up to 6%.

The report said 35% of the BRI infrastructure project portfolio has encountered major implementation problems, such as corruption scandals or labour violations, with Pakistan topping the list of countries with the most number of projects hit by scandals and corruption.

SNIPPETS

GS-3

❖ ECONOMY

Q) Core sector grew 11.6% in August. Explain.

India’s core sector output accelerated for a second straight month in August, rising 11.6%, buoyed in part by the year-earlier month’s 6.9% contraction. Four of the eight sectors registered strong double-digit growth, even as output of fertilizers and crude oil declined.

The output was also 3.9% higher than the pre-COVID August 2019 level, quicker than July's 1.6% increase from the comparable pre-pandemic month of 2019.

Cement production jumped 36% as compared with a 14.5% contraction in August 2020, while coal and natural gas registered a similar 20.6% surge. Electricity and refinery products expanded by 15.3% and 9.1%, respectively, and steel output grew 5.1%, data from the Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade showed.

All sub-sectors except refinery products and crude oil saw output above pre-COVID levels. Core sector output had expanded 9.9% in July and 9.3% in June.



Q) The recently launched DigiSaksham is:

- a. A digital skills programme to enhance the employability of youth by imparting digital skills.
- b. A Scheme aimed at providing encouragement and support to specially abled children to pursue Technical Education.
- c. A scheme aimed at making people in rural areas, across States/UTs, digitally literate.
- d. A digital wallet that enables storage and access to educational documents, health records, certificates electronically.



Q) With respect to anti-defection Law, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Under the Anti-defection Law, the power to decide the disqualification of an MP or MLA rests with the presiding officer of the legislature in consultation with the Election Commission of India.
2. Supreme Court has observed that anti-defection cases should be decided by Speakers in six months' time in all circumstances.

Options:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) Both d) None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Under the anti-defection law, the power to decide the disqualification of an MP or MLA rests with the presiding officer of the legislature. Consultation with the Election Commission of India is not required.
- The law does not specify a time frame in which such a decision has to be made. However, the Supreme Court observed that anti-defection cases should be decided by Speakers in three months' time.

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