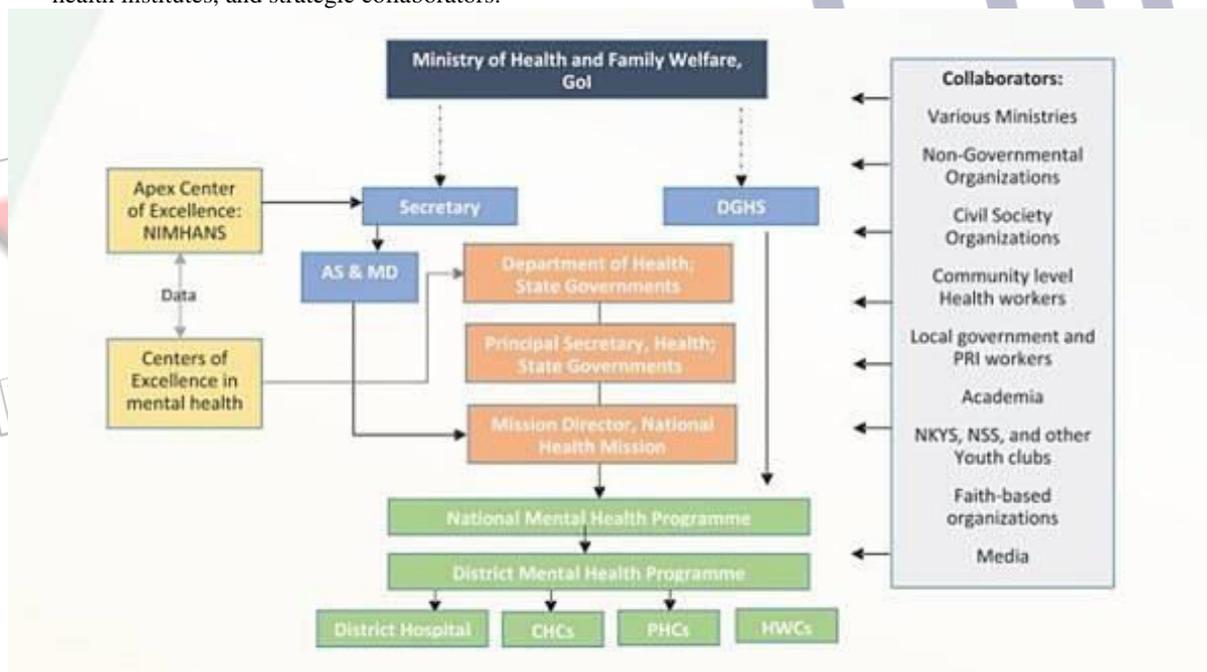


SOCIAL ISSUES

National Suicide Prevention Strategy

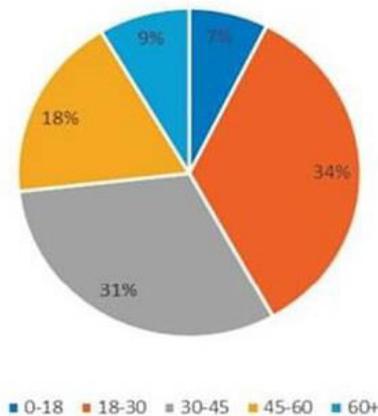
- ❖ **CONTEXT:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently unveiled the National Suicide Prevention Strategy — the first-of-its-kind policy formulated by the government to prevent suicides as a public health priority.
- **What is India's National Suicide Prevention Strategy?**
 - According to the ministry, the policy that will set the stage for promotion of mental health and prevention of suicides in the coming decade.
 - The goal of the strategy is to reduce suicide mortality in the country by 10 per cent by 2023.
 - The strategy provides a framework for multiple stakeholders to implement activities for prevention of suicides in the country.
- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy: Objectives**
 - There are three main objectives of the strategy.
 - ✓ **First**, it seeks to establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within the next three years.
 - ✓ **Second**, it seeks to establish psychiatric outpatient departments that will provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programme in all districts within the next five years.
 - ✓ **Third**, it aims to integrate a mental well-being curriculum in all educational institutions within the next eight years.
 - The fourth objective of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy is to strengthen surveillance of suicide and further generation of evidence through evaluation, that will ensure improvement in the programme quality.
- **Stakeholders in implementation framework**
 - The implementation framework of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy envisions five key stakeholders responsible for realising the objectives. These include national-level ministerial stakeholders, state-level governmental stakeholders, district-level governmental stakeholders, NIMHANS-Bangalore and other top mental health institutes, and strategic collaborators.



Proposed structure of implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. (Credit: mohfw website)

- **Implementation mechanism**
 - Reinforcing leadership, partnerships and institutional capacity in the country
 - Enhancing the capacity of health services to provide suicide prevention services
 - Developing community resilience and societal support for suicide prevention and reduce stigma associated with suicidal behaviours.
- **Suicides in India: What's the current scenario?**
 - According to the annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), released in August 2022, 1.64 lakh people died by suicide in 2021 — an increase of 7.2 per cent from 2020. This is 10 per cent higher than the COVID deaths (1.48 lakh) in India in 2020, and 6.8 times the maternal deaths (23,800) in the same year.
 - The NCRB report also stated that more than 1,00,000 people die by suicide in the country every year. A total of 25,891 suicides were reported in the 53 megacities of the country during 2021, with the highest in Delhi.

- In the past three years, the suicide rate in the country has increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000 population. Most suicides in India are by youth and middle-aged adults — with 65 per cent of the suicides in 2020 being reported in the age group of 18-45 years.
- **Ongoing suicide prevention initiatives in India**
- The National Mental Health Policy (2014) sees prevention of mental disorders, reduction of suicide and attempted suicide as core priority areas.
- The Mental Healthcare Act 2017 brought in some necessary changes. The Act that came into force from May 2018 effectively decriminalised attempted suicide, which was punishable under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. It ensured that the individuals who have attempted suicide are offered opportunities for rehabilitation from the government as opposed to being tried or punished.
- Several national programmes such as the National Mental Health Program, National Palliative Care Program, Ayushman Bharat and Nasha Mukti Abhiyaan Task Force are also in place.



GEOPOLITICS

Russia's nuclear icebreakers and militarisation of the Arctic

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** Recently Russian President Vladimir Putin virtually presided over the launch and flag raising ceremony of two nuclear-powered icebreakers at St. Petersburg and said such icebreakers were of “strategic importance”. As climate change opens up the Arctic giving access to new routes and resources, there is a race by adjoining countries to build up their militaries and Russia has a clear lead over them.
- **Why are the Russian icebreakers significant?**
 - According to Mr. Putin both icebreakers were laid down as part of their large-scale, systematic work to re-equip and replenish the domestic icebreaker fleet, to strengthen Russia’s status as a “great Arctic power.”
 - The 173.3-metre-long ‘Yakutia’, with a displacement of up to 33,540 tonnes, was launched into water and can break through three metres of ice. The flag was raised on another vessel Ural, which is expected to become operational in December 2022, while the Yakutia will join service by end-2024.
 - There are two already similar vessels in service, Arktika and Sibir. A much more powerful 209-metre-long nuclear icebreaker “Rossiya,” displacing up to 71,380 tonnes, would be completed by 2027.
 - In the last two decades, Russia has reactivated several Soviet era Arctic military bases and upgraded its capabilities.
 - Putin highlighted the importance of the Northern Sea Route, which cuts down time to reach Asia by up to two weeks compared to the current route via the Suez canal. In line with this, the updated Russian naval doctrine, unveiled in July 2022, envisages “diversifying and stepping up naval activities on the Spitsbergen, Franz Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya archipelagos and Wrangel Island.
 - In the backdrop of the war on Ukraine, on March 3, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the U.S. announced that they would “temporarily pause participation in all meetings of the [Arctic] Council and its subsidiary bodies.
- **Why are countries racing towards the Arctic?**
 - There has been a race among Arctic states and near-Arctic states to augment their capabilities in a bid to be ready to capitalise on the melting Arctic.
 - Russian military modernisation in the Arctic has prompted other Arctic states to join the bandwagon. Unlike Antarctica, the Arctic is not a global common accentuating the problem.
 - For instance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has been conducting regular exercises in the region while partner countries are investing in upgrading military capabilities. At the same time, China, which calls itself to be a near-Arctic state, has also announced ambitious plans for a ‘polar silk route’ to connect to Europe as well building massive icebreakers.
- **Where does India stand with respect to the Arctic?**
 - Since 2007, India has an Arctic research programme with as many as 13 expeditions undertaken till date.
 - In March 2022, India unveiled its first Arctic policy titled: ‘India and the Arctic: building a partnership for sustainable development’.
 - India is also one of the 13 Observers in the Arctic Council, the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation in the Arctic.

As the earth further heats up, which is more profound at the poles, the race for the Arctic is set to accelerate which makes the Arctic the next geopolitical hotspot with all interests converging on it – environmental, economic, political and military.

PRELIMS

1. National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA)

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❖ **CONTEXT:** From 1st December 2022 all the complaints related to profiteering will be dealt with by Competition Commission of India (CCI) in place of NAA. Since the tenure of NAA ends in November 2022 its functions will be taken over by the CCI.

➤ **About**

• NAA is a statutory body set up under Section 171 of the Central GST Act, 2017 to check whether trade and industry were passing on rate reductions under the Goods and Services (GST) Tax.

• **Main function:**

✓ To ensure that traders are not realising unfair profit by charging high prices from the consumers in the name of GST.

✓ To examine and check such profiteering activities and recommend punitive actions including cancellation of licences.

✓ To examine whether additional input tax credits availed by any registered person or the reduction in the tax rate have actually resulted in a commensurate reduction in prices to the recipients.

• **Institutional framework:** Chairman, Four Technical Members, Secretary.

• **Sunset clause for Anti-Profiteering law:** In terms of Rule 137 of the CGST Rules, 2017, the Anti-Profiteering Authority shall cease to exist after the expiry of two years from the date on which the Chairman of the Authority enters upon his office unless the GST Council recommends otherwise.

• **Maximum time envisaged for resolution of cases:** 9 months excluding the time taken by the State-level screening committee and the Standing Committee (maximum 2 months) for processing the complaints.

• **Suo moto action:**

✓ The NAA can take note of any instance of anti-profiteering even without a complaint from a citizen.

✓ This can be done because the chairman of the NAA is also a civilian and s/he can also take cognizance of such acts.

✓ Even mock purchases can be made by NAA officers to check a trader's invoice for any profiteering activity.

2. **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**

❖ **CONTEXT:** India and GCC have agreed to pursue a free trade agreement between the two regions and resumes the negotiations.

➤ **What is Gulf Cooperation Council?**

• The GCC was formed in 1981 by an agreement among Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), that was concluded in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

• It is an economic and political union comprising of all the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf except Iraq.

• Although its current official name is Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, it is still popularly and unofficially known as the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is its former official name.

• The grouping was formed in view of the similar political establishments in the countries based on Islamic principles, their geographical proximity, joint destiny and common objectives.

➤ **Members**

• The six members of the GCC are Saudi Arabia (absolute monarchy), Qatar (constitutional monarchy), Oman (absolute monarchy), UAE (federal monarchy), Bahrain, and Kuwait (constitutional monarchies).

• Possible future members: The possible future members of GCC may be Yemen, Jordan, and Morocco.

➤ **GDP of the group** The GCC members are some of the fastest-growing economies of the world. It has a total GDP (nominal) of \$1.638 trillion.

➤ **Objectives**

• The chief objectives of the GCC are to have integration, coordination, and interconnection between the member countries in all fields. It comprises of strengthening people-to-people ties, and formulating similar regulations in finance, economy, customs, trade, tourism, administration, and legislation.

• Fostering scientific and technical cooperation in the areas of agriculture, mining, industry, animal resources, and water. Having a unified military etc.

• **Ambitious projects of GCC:** The GCC aims of having a common market and economic nationality. There are also plans to have a single currency. Such a currency may be known as Khaleeji.

➤ **Why are the Gulf countries important for India?**

• The two most important reasons for the importance of the relationship between India and the gulf are oil and gas, and trade. Two additional reasons are the huge number of Indians who work in the Gulf countries, and the remittance they send back home.

• The share of Persian Gulf countries in India's crude imports has remained at around 60 per cent over the last 15 years.

• In 2021-2022, the largest exporter of oil to India was Iraq, whose share has gone up from 9 per cent in 2009-2010 to 22 per cent. Saudi Arabia has accounted for 17-18 per cent of India's oil imports for over a decade. Kuwait and UAE remain major oil exporters to India. Iran used to be the second largest oil exporter to India in 2009-2010, its share went down to less than 1 per cent in 2020-21, due to US sanctions.

• In 2021-2022, the largest exporter of oil to India was Iraq, whose share has gone up from 9 per cent in 2009-2010 to 22 per cent.

- Counting only the 13.4 million non-resident Indians (NRIs), the Gulf has the largest number of Indian abroad. The UAE (3.42 million), Saudi Arabia (2.6 million) and Kuwait (1.03 million) together account for over half of all NRIs.
- In terms of remittances from abroad, India was the largest recipient in 2020 at \$83.15 billion, according to World Bank data. This was nearly twice the remittances to the next highest recipient, Mexico, at \$42.9 billion.
- The largest contributor is the huge Indian diaspora in the Gulf. In a bulletin in November 2018, its last on this subject, the Reserve Bank of India said the GCC countries accounted for more than 50 per cent of the total \$69 billion in remittances received by India in 2016-17.

3. **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**

❖ **CONTEXT: Recently centre said it is open to taking “ Pro Farmer” changes on the PMFBY to meet the challenges of recent climate crisis and rapid technological advances.**

- PMFBY insures farmers against all non-preventable natural risks from pre-sowing to post-harvest.
- **Objectives:** To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crops as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
- ✓ To stabilize the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
- ✓ To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
- ✓ To ensure the flow of credit to the agriculture sector.
- **Payment of premium:** Farmers have to pay a maximum of 2 percent of the total premium of the insured amount for Kharif crops, 1.5 percent for rabi food crops and oilseeds as well as 5 percent for commercial/horticultural crops.
- ✓ The balance premium is shared by the Union and state governments on a 50:50 basis and on a 90:10 basis in the case of northeastern states.
- Claims are worked out on the basis of shortfall in actual yield, vis-a-vis the threshold yield in the notified area.
- ✓ It shall be implemented through a multi-agency framework by selected insurance companies under the overall guidance & control of the Department of Agriculture and state government.
- ✓ There is no upper limit on Government subsidies.
- ✓ The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low and the balance premium is paid by the Government to provide the full insured amount to the farmers.

4. **India's conservation efforts towards tortoise and turtles lauded in CITES CoP 19**

❖ **CONTEXT: India's proposal for transferring Leith's Softshell Turtle (Nilssonina leithi) from Appendix II to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES) has been adopted by the Conference of Parties (CoP) to CITES in its 19th Meeting at Panama.**

- The proposal was introduced by Shri Chandra Prakash Goyal, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary, MoEFCC on 23rd November 2022 when the Committee I of CoP took up the proposal for consideration.

➤ **The species and threat to it**

- Leith's Softshell Turtle is a large fresh water soft-shelled turtle which is endemic to peninsular India and it inhabits rivers and reservoirs.
- ✓ The species has been subject to intensive exploitation over the past 30 years.
- It has been poached and illegally consumed within India.
- It has also been illegally traded abroad for meat and for its calipee.
- The population of this turtle species is estimated to have declined by 90% over the past 30 years such that the species is now difficult to find. It is classified as 'Critically Endangered' by the IUCN.

➤ **Protection and challenges**

- The species is listed on Schedule IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, which gives it protection from hunting as well as trade.
- However, poaching and illegal trade of protected turtle species is a major challenge in India with seizures of thousands of specimens reported every year.
- Species level identification of seized specimens is also a challenge.
- Tortoises and freshwater turtles are targeted for the international pet, meat and calipee trade, as well as for illegal domestic consumption in some areas.

➤ **The recent development**

- The CITES Appendix I listing of this Turtle species would ensure that legal international trade in the species does not take place for commercial purposes.
- It would also ensure that international trade in captive-bred specimens only takes place from registered facilities and further that higher and more proportionate penalties are provided for illegal trade of the species.
- The listing of the Leith's soft-shell turtle, thereby, strengthens its CITES protection status so as to ensure better survival of the species.

➤ **Other proposals by India**

- The 19th meeting of the CoP to CITES is being held in Panama from 14th to 25th November 2022. India's proposal for inclusion of Jeypore Hill Gecko (Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis) in Appendix II and the transfer of Red-

Crowned Roofed Turtle (Batagur kachuga) from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES have also been adopted by the CoP in this meeting.

➤ **CITES CoP 19**

- At CoP of CITES, also known as the World Wildlife Conference, all 184 Parties to CITES have the right to attend, to put forward proposals for the Conference to consider, and to vote on all decisions. 52 proposals have been put forward so far that would affect the regulations on international trade for: sharks, reptiles, hippos, songbirds, rhinos, 200 tree species, orchids, elephants, turtles and more.
- **About CITES:** CITES is an international agreement to which States and regional economic integration organizations adhere voluntarily. Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Do you think India will meet 50 percent of its energy needs from renewable energy by 2030? Justify your answer. How will the shift of subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables help achieve the above objective? Explain.

India at the COP 26th meeting of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) committed to the 5-point agenda programme. One of them is to meet 50% of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030.

To reach the above commitments India has already achieved few targets:

- India has overachieved its commitment made at COP 21- Paris Summit by already meeting 40% of its power capacity from non-fossil fuels.
- India is also one of the world's largest producers of modern bioenergy.
- Today, India is the world's third largest producer of renewable energy, with 40% of its installed electricity capacity coming from non-fossil fuel sources.
- India's massive UJALA LED bulb campaign is reducing emissions by 40 million tonnes annually.

However, there are a few challenges in achieving the target:

- To meet the above target India will need massive funding. BloombergNEF (BNEF) report says that only to meet wind and solar energy targets India will need \$223 Billion.
- In the short-term rising interest rates, a depreciating rupee and high-inflation create challenges for the financing of renewables.
- Even, to complete the targets Indian government needs to cut down its taxes for almost 2 lakh crores by 2030 which will affect the other sectors like education, health and infrastructure.

Fossil fuel subsidies by the Union government have fallen 742% since 2014 but the subsidies on coal, oil and gas increased by nine times in 2021-22. Still, the Fossil fuel subsidies in India nine times higher than renewable energy. So, there is no complete shift to subsidies on renewable energy sources.

Although, the shift of subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables will help in subsidies for E- vehicles and raising taxes on fossil fuels will help in achieving the above objective because giving subsidies to renewable sources will make it look cheaper and this will also work against the fossil-fueled incumbents that are preventing new renewable energy entrants access to the market. For example, giving subsidies for E- vehicles and raising taxes on fossil fuels will help in achieving levels needed by 2030 as it will contain global warming to the Paris goal of 1.5-2C.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements about the Arctic Council:
 1. It is an inter-governmental forum.
 2. It cannot implement or enforce its guidelines or recommendations.
 3. India is currently having the Observer status at the Arctic Council.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) 1 and 2 only
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
2. Consider the following statements
 1. India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic Ocean in 2007
 2. India established a research base named "Priyadashini" at the International Arctic Research Base at NorwayChoose the correct statement/s using the codes given below
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. With reference to Leith's Softshell Turtle (Nilssononia leithi) consider the following statements
 1. The species is found in peninsular Indian rivers including the Bhavani, Godavari, and Moyar Rivers.
 2. It is classified as 'Endangered' by the IUCNWhich of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only

- b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. With reference to 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bina Yojana', consider the following statements:
1. Under this scheme, farmers will have to pay a uniform premium of two per cent for any crop they cultivate in any season of the year.
2. This scheme covers post-harvest losses arising out of cyclones and unseasonal rains.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. With reference to the Gulf Cooperation Council, consider the following statements:
1. It is an economic and political union comprising all the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf with the exception of Iraq.
2. Its Secretariat is located in Kuwait.
3. Iraq is the latest member country to join the GCC.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 2 only
d) 3 only
6. Consider the following statements about Anti-Profitteering authority under GST
1. It ensures that the benefits that accrue to entities due to reduction in the rate of tax is passed on to consumers
2. The concept was developed by World Customs Organisation
Select the correct statements
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Exercise "Samanvay 2022" is a humanitarian assistance exercise associated with which of the following?
a) Indian Navy
b) NDMA
c) Indian Army
d) Indian Air Force
8. With reference to Exercise NASEEM AL BAHR - 2022 sea phase consider the following statements
1. The exercise was conducted from 19 to 24 November 2022 off the coast of Oman which was the 30th Edition
2. It is a multi lateral exercise between India , USA, Australia and Oman
Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. With reference to Mission POSHAN 2.0, consider the following statements:
1. Mission POSHAN 2.0 is an Integrated Nutrition Support Programme.
2. It will encompass Anganwadi Services, the Scheme for Adolescent Girls, and Poshan Abhiyaan.
Which of the above statements is/are not correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Bollgard I and Bollgard II technologies are mentioned in the context of which of the following?
a) clonal propagation of crop plants
b) developing genetically modified crop plants
c) production of plant growth substances
d) production of biofertilizers