Prelim Bits 18-06-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Inter-State Council

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister wrote to Prime Minister asking that at least 3 meetings of the Inter-State Council should be held every year to strengthen the spirit of cooperative federalism.

- The Inter-State Council is a mechanism that was constituted "to support Centre-State and Inter-State coordination and cooperation in India".
- It was established under **Article 263** of the Constitution, which states that the President may constitute such a body if a need is felt for it.
- The Council is basically meant to serve as a **forum for discussions** among various governments.
- In 1988, the **Sarkaria Commission** suggested the Inter-State Council should exist as a permanent body.
- So, in **1990**, the Inter-State Council came into existence through a **Presidential Order**.
- The Clause 5 of the Order mandates that ISC meetings shall be conducted at least thrice every year.
- **Main functions** of the Council are
    1. Inquiring into and advising on disputes between states,
    2. Investigating and discussing subjects in which two states or states and the Union have a common interest, and
    3. Making recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action.
- **Members** - The Prime Minister is the chairman of the Council.
- The Council's members include the Chief Ministers of all states and UTs with legislative assemblies, and Administrators of other UTs.
- Six Ministers of Cabinet rank in the Centre's Council of Ministers, nominated by the Prime Minister, are also its members.
- **Reconstitution** - The Council was reconstituted recently to have 10 Union Ministers as permanent invitees.
- The standing committee of the Council has been reconstituted with the Union Home Minister as Chairman.
- Union Finance Minister and the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, UP, and Gujarat are some of the other standing committee members.

Since its constitution in 1990, the Inter-State Council has met only 11 times. Last meeting was held in 2016.

Committees

- In 1969, the then Government of Tamil Nadu set up an expert committee to study Centre-state relations, headed by P V Rajamannar - a former Madras High Court Chief Justice.
- The **Rajmannar Commission**, which submitted a report in 1971, recommended the Inter-State Council should be constituted immediately.

- The last meeting (2016) included consideration of the **Punchhi Commission's** recommendations on Centre-State Relations (in 2010).
- States asked for maintaining the federal structure amid growing "centralisation".
- Imposition of Article 356 of the Constitution, which deals with the imposition of President's Rule in states, was a matter of concern.

Reference

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2. https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/CCSRelation120508.pdf
3. https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2022/jun/17/resume-inter-state-council-meetings-tamil-nadu-cm-mk-stalin-to-pm-narendra-modi-2466445.html

Black Death

A new study has found that the Black Death disease originated in modern day northern Kyrgyzstan around 1338-1339.

- The Black Death ('mortal disease of buboes' and 'pestilence of buboes') refers to the bubonic plague.
- This plague, which killed millions, spread across Western Asia, Northern Africa, Middle East and Europe in **1346-53**.
- The bubonic plague, a rare **zoonotic disease**, is one of the deadliest epidemics in the history of humankind.
- **Spread** - The Black Death was caused by **Yersinia pestis** - a bacillus bacterium**.**
- The Y. pestis was **spread by infected fleas** that were carried by **rodent hosts**.
- It spread to human populations, who at some point transmitted it to others either through the vector of a human flea or directly through the respiratory system.
- **Symptoms** - The onset of symptoms was followed by intense fever, joint pains and vomiting of blood.
- After the initial infection, most victims died within 2-7 days.
- The plague causes severe swelling in the groin and armpits (the lymph nodes), which take on a sickening black colour, hence the name Black Death.
- The black sores can cover the body in general, caused by internal haemorrhages, were known as buboes (hard, inflamed lymph nodes)m from which bubonic plague takes its name.
- **Related Links** - Bubonic Plague, Mice Plague

Bubonic plague is one of the three plagues caused by bacterium Yersinia pestis - Septicaemic plague and Pneumonic plague.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-black-death-origins-7974071/
2. https://www.worldhistory.org/Black_Death/

Bharat Gaurav Trains

The Indian Railways' southern zone flagged off the country's first privately-run train under the Bharat Gaurav scheme.

- The first Bharat Gaurav Train (**Theme- based Tourist Circuit train**) will run from Coimbatore North to Sainagar Shirdi.
- South Star Rail is the registered service provider that operates this train.
- The service provider has paid Rs 1 crore as security deposit to Southern Railway for the rake with a composition of 20 coaches.

Bharat Gaurav Policy

- Launched in 2021, the Bharat Gaurav policy **allows private players to operate trains on theme-based circuits** for running special tourism packages.
- Its objective is to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and historical places to people of India and the world, through Bharat Gaurav Trains.
- **Trains** - Anyone can approach Railways to lease the 3,033 conventional Integral Coach Factory-design coaches earmarked for this segment.
- Each train will have 14-20 coaches, including two guard coaches or SLR.
- These trains cannot be used as ordinary transport trains between an origin and destination.
- **Two options** - Registered Service Providers shall be offered rakes consisting of ICF coaches under **"Right to Use" model** by Indian Railways (IR) for operations of Bharat Gaurav Trains.
- Service Providers shall also have the option of procurement of new coaches directly from production units through the **Non Railway Customer (NRC) plan**.
- **Model** - The Bharat Gaurav operator will have to propose a business model similar to the IRCTC's model of theme-based tourist trains.
- The operator has the flexibility to decide the business model including routes, themes, itinerary, tariff and other attributes connected with this model.
- However, the operator has to take care of end-to-end service like hotel stay, local arrangements, etc. along with operating the trains.
- The tenure of the arrangement is a minimum of two years and maximum of the codal life of the coach.
- **Indian Railways' role** - It will provide staff to drive the trains, guards and also maintenance staff on board for the coaches.
- Other staff, like housekeeping and catering, etc, will be deployed by the operator.
- It will also ensure that its entire infrastructure is in place to safely and efficiently host the train in its network.
- It will also give this priority in its paths, like the Rajdhanis and premium trains, so that these trains are not held up or sidelined to make way for regular trains.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-bharat-gaurav-train-indian-railways-7973371/
2. https://bharatgauravtrains.indianrailways.gov.in/rakebooking/briefpolicy.jsp

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

National Health Authority (NHA) organizes orientation workshop for Joint Directors/ Directors of State on Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

- Launched in 2021, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure of the country.
- It will bridge the existing gap amongst different stakeholders of Healthcare ecosystem through digital highways.

- The ABDM aims to provide **Unique Digital Health IDs** (UHID) for all Indian citizens to help hospitals, insurance firms, and citizens access health records electronically when required.
- **National Health Authority** (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will be the implementing Agency.

Components of ABDM

- **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) Number** standardizes the process of identification of an individual across healthcare providers.
- This is the only way to ensure that the created medical records are issued to the correct individual or accessed by Health Information User through appropriate consent.
- In order to issue the UHID, the system must collect certain basic details including demographic and location, family/relationship, etc.
- The ABHA Number will be used to identify persons, authenticate them, and thread their health records (only with the informed consent of the patient) across multiple systems and stakeholders.
- **Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR)** is a comprehensive repository of all healthcare professionals involved in delivery of healthcare services across both modern & traditional medical systems.
- **Health Facility Registry (HFR)** is a comprehensive repository of health facilities of the nation across different systems of medicine.
- It includes **both public and private health facilities** including hospitals, clinics, diagnostic labs & imaging centers, pharmacies, etc.
- Enrolling in the Health Facility Registry will enable them to get connected to India's digital health ecosystem.
- **ABHA Mobile App** (PHR) is an electronic record of health-related information on an individual that conforms to nationally recognized interoperability standards.
- It can be drawn from multiple sources while being managed, shared, and controlled by the individual.
- The most salient feature of the PHR, and the one that distinguishes it from the EMR and EHR, is that the information it contains is under the control of the individual.
- **Unified Health Interface (UHI)** is envisioned as an open protocol for various digital health services.
- UHI Network will be an open network of End User Applications (EUAs) and participating Health Service Provider (HSP) applications.
- UHI will enable a wide variety of digital health services between patients and health service providers (HSPs) including appointment booking, teleconsultation, service discovery and others.

ABDM Sandbox

- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Sandbox was created as a part of the ABDM mission.
- It will act as a framework for technology and product testing.
- It will help organisations, including private players planning to be a part of the National Digital Health Ecosystem, become a Health Information Provider or Health Information User or efficiently link with building blocks of ABDM.

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1832106

2. https://ndhm.gov.in/abdm
3. https://ndhm.gov.in/abdm-components

Crypto Lending

A U.S. cryptocurrency lending company Celsius Network froze withdrawals and transfers, citing "extreme" market conditions, sparking a sell-off across crypto markets.

- Crypto lending is essentially banking for the crypto world.
- Just as customers at traditional banks earn interest on their savings in dollars or pounds, crypto users that deposit their cryptocurrency (bitcoin or ether) at crypto lenders also earn money, usually in cryptocurrency.
- A cryptocurrency-backed loan uses digital currency as collateral, similar to a securities-based loan.
- The basic principle works like a mortgage loan or auto loan - you pledge your crypto assets to obtain the loan and pay it off over time.
- Crypto lenders make **money by lending digital tokens** to investors or crypto companies, who might use the tokens for speculation, hedging or as working capital.
- **Upside** - Low interest rates, loan amount is based on asset value, choice of loan currency, no credit check, fast funding, ability to lend crypto
- **Downside** - Unlike traditional regulated banks, crypto lenders aren't overseen by financial regulators – so there are few rules on the capital they must hold, or transparency over their reserves.
- That means that customers who hold their crypto at the platforms could lose access to their funds – as happened with Celsius on Monday.
- Crypto lenders also face other risks, from volatility in crypto markets than can hit the value of savings to tech failures and hacks.

Crypto lending has boomed over the past two years, along as **decentralised finance** (DeFi) platforms.

DeFi and crypto lending both tout a vision of financial services where lenders and borrowers bypass the traditional financial firms that act as gatekeepers for loans or other products.

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