UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 19-09-2024

New Pension Scheme (NPS) Vatsalya Scheme

The Union Finance Minister launched the New Pension Scheme (NPS) Vatsalya Scheme recently.

- It is a significant initiative ***enables parents or guardians*** including NRIs, or OCIs, to open a pension account for minors by creating long-term financial security.

• **NRI** - Non-Resident Indian, and it refers to people who are either citizens of India or of Indian origin, but who live outside of India.	• **OCI** - Overseas Citizen of India and is an immigration status that allows foreign nationals of Indian origin to live and work in India indefinitely.

- Through this route, parents / guardians can build a retirement corpus for their children from their childhood ***upto the age of 18.***
- **Managed by -** The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- **Eligibility** - Any minor citizen (up to 18 years old) can participate.
- The NPS Vatsalya account can be opened both offline and online.
- **PRAN Cards -** Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN) cards to newly registered minors to avail this scheme.
- **Contribution -** As little as Rs 1,000 annually, making it accessible to families from various economic backgrounds.
- For NRI and OCI subscribers, contributions can be made from their NRE (Non-Resident External) and NRO (Non-Resident Ordinary) accounts.
- **Withdrawal** - After a lock-in period of 3 years, withdrawals of up to 25% are allowed for specific purposes like education, illness, or disability. This can be done a ***maximum of 3 times.***
- **Exit -** Once the minor turns 18, the NPS Vatsalya account automatically transitions to an NPS Tier-I account under the 'All Citizen' category.
    - If the total savings (corpus) is more than Rs 2.5 lakh, 80% must be used to purchase an annuity, and 20% can be withdrawn as a lump sum.
    - If the corpus is Rs 2.5 lakh or less, the entire amount can be withdrawn as a lump sum.
- **Death of the minor**- In case of the minor's death, the entire corpus will be returned to the guardian.

References

1. Times of India | NPS Vatsalya
2. India Today | NPS Vatsalya
3. Economic Times | NPS Vatsalya

World Patient Safety Day, 2024

On the eve of World Patient Safety Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) urged all stakeholders to commit to reducing diagnostic errors and improving patient safety.

- World Patient Safety Day, observed ***annually*** on September 17.
- **Established by -** World Health Organization (WHO) in 2019 following the adoption of resolution WHA72.6 by the World Health Assembly.
    - The resolution was a response to the high global rate of avoidable medical errors and patient harm, highlighting the urgent need for action to minimize harm in healthcare.
- **Aim -** To raise awareness about the critical importance of patient safety in healthcare systems worldwide.
- **Theme, 2024 -** It focuses on enhancing diagnosis for patient safety, under the slogan "Get it right, make it safe!".
- **Objectives of World Patient Safety Day 2024**
    - Increase public awareness and commitment to patient safety
    - Improve understanding of patient safety
    - Promote global solidarity and action
    - Address specific patient safety issues

Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030 indicated that only 47% of countries are addressing diagnostic safety.

- A diagnosis determines a patient's health condition and is crucial for providing the necessary care and treatment.
- A diagnostic error occurs when there is a failure to provide an accurate and timely explanation of a patient's health issue.
- This can involve delays, incorrect or missed diagnoses, or failing to effectively communicate the diagnosis to the patient.
- The movement for patient safety gained momentum after recognising that unsafe healthcare practices contribute significantly to avoidable harm and costs to health systems globally.
- **Importance**
    - **Raise awareness -** It educates healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the general public on the importance of safety in medical care.
    - **Prevent harm** - The day advocates for the prevention of errors, the reduction of avoidable harm, and the improvement of healthcare outcomes.
    - **Patient-centred care** - It promotes a culture where patients are empowered and actively involved in their care decisions, fostering transparency and communication between healthcare providers and patients.

References

1. The Hindu | World Patient Safety Day

2. NDTV | World Patient Safety Day 2024

Melting Glaciers in Central Asian Countries

Tian Shan mountain range, home to thousands of glaciers that are melting at an alarming rate in Central Asia pose a significant risk for towns and cities in Kyrgyzstan.

- **Tian Shan mountain range** – It extends into China, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. 8 to 10 years ago, the glacier was visibly snow-covered.
- The Tien Shan is regarded as the ***"Water tower of Central Asia,"*** being a solid reservoir of freshwater resources and also a natural and early warning indicator of climate change.

According to a report by the Eurasian Development Bank between 14% and 30% of glaciers in the Tian-Shan and Pamir, 2 main mountain ranges in Central Asia have melted over the last 60 years.

- Until the end of the 1960s, the glaciers of the entire Central Asian region, and not only the region but the world as a whole, remained in a more or less stable state.
- In the early 1970s, there was a sharp acceleration in the rate of degradation.
- Conventionally, from 1973 to 1978, the winter glacier mass balance decreased by more than three times.

Adygene glacier *has retreated by around 16 centimetres (six inches) every year.*

- **Cause** - Climate change are notably pronounced in Central Asia, which has been increasingly plagued by extreme weather events.
- **Recent Findings -** The retreat of countless glaciers poses a significant threat to the landlocked region that is already facing water scarcity.
- Melted glacial waters comprise up to 50% of the glacial runoff, that is, the annual runoff during the vegetative season.
- Kyrgyzstan is share water with the downstream neighbouring countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, where most of the region's population resides.
- Glaciers acts as a water reserves which are pivotal for the area's food security, and these are the vital freshwater sources which are vanishing rapidly.
- The glaciers cannot regenerate due to rising temperatures.
- The receding glaciers have introduced a new Risk for Kyrgyz towns and cities, as meltwater forms new lakes that can overflow and create dangerous torrents, as this water carries rocks.
- This may flows down the valley, and can impact towns & cities like capital, Bishkek.
- Increasing demand for substantial natural resources in the area, particularly gold extraction, may accelerates ice melting through chemical processes.

- Forecasts show Central Asia's glaciers will halve by 2050 and disappear completely by 2100.
- **Measures**- Natives of this region have installed a sensor about 50 centimeters above the water level that will transmit radio alerts in case of flooding.
- **UN Response** - United Nations, responded to the initiative of the government of Tajikistan, declared next year the Year of Glacier Conservation.

References

1. The Hindu | Melting glaciers of Central Asia worry scientists
2. The Business Standard | Melting glaciers worry Central Asia

Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) Scheme

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet has recently sanctioned Rs.5,000 crore as credit guarantee fund for the MSME sector through the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme.

- It is a credit guarantee scheme to make available ***collateral-free Credit*** to the Micro and Small Enterprises.
- **Launched in –** 2000.
- **Established by -** Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME) and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).
- Under the revamped CGTMSE scheme, both new and existing micro and small enterprises, including manufacturing and service enterprises are eligible for a credit facility of up to Rs. 5 crores.
- **Funding -** Contributed by the Government of India and SIDBI in the ratio of 4:1.
- **Interest Rates** - As per RBI's Guidelines is eligible for coverage under CGTMSE.
- **Eligible Activities**
  - Manufacturing and Services including Retail trade is allowed.
  - Educational and Training institutions, Self Help Groups (SHGs), and agriculture-related activities are not eligible
- **Loan Amount**
  - For Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) – Credit facility up to Rs. 500 lakh can be covered on an outstanding basis.
  - For Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Select Financial Institutions credit facilities up to Rs. 50 lakh is allowed.
- **Guarantee Coverage -** From 75% – 85% (50% Coverage for retail activity)
- **Collateral / Third Party Guarantee -** Not required.
- **Annual Guarantee Fee for amount up to Rs. 1 crore-** Fee revised from 2% and reduced to as low as 0.37%.
- **Benefits of CGTMSE Scheme**
  - Ceiling for Guarantee coverage raised from Rs. 200 lakh to Rs. 500 lakh
  - Guarantee fee reduced to diminish the overall cost of borrowings to MSEs
  - Micro Finance Institutions as Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) are now eligible

- Concessions related to fees and increased coverage to SC/STs
- Reduced Guarantee fee by 10% and coverage extent increased to 85% to Women, ZED Certified Units and Units in Aspirational Districts
- Annual Guarantee Fee structure revised and fee reduced to as low as 0.37%.

References

1. The Hindu | Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for MSME scheme.
2. CGTMSE | About

Elephant culling in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe to Cull 200 Elephants to Alleviate Food Shortages Amid Drought.

- **Elephant rich countries -** Estimated about 200,000 elephants inhabit a conservation zone that spans across 5 southern African nations - Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Angola, and Namibia.
- This area is home to one of the largest elephant populations globally.
- Zimbabwe, home to over 84,000 ***African savanna elephant (Loxodonta africana)***, also known as the African bush elephant, second highest worldwide.
- Home to one of the largest elephant herds, Zimbabwe holds approximately $600 million in ivory stockpiles that remain unsellable.
- **Culling -** The cull, the first of its kind in the nation since 1988, is set to occur in the districts of Hwange, Mbire, Tsholotsho, and Chiredzi of Zimbabwe.
- The culling comes after Namibia's decision to slaughter 83 Elephants and 700 wild animals, to overcome food shortages.
- **Reason for Culling**- Overpopulation of Elephants highlights that it leads to resource depletion and escalating human-wildlife conflicts.
- The nation has been advocating to the U.N.'s Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to allow the resumption of ivory and live elephant trading.
- CITES controls on ***international trade in live elephants.***
- African elephants in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe are included in ***CITES Appendix II.***
- This means that CITES Parties have agreed that
  - Although the species is "not necessarily now threatened with extinction" in these States,
  - It may become so unless international trade in specimens from these States is strictly regulated in order to "avoid utilization incompatible with their survival".
- **Center for Natural Resource Governance** - In Zimbabwe, denounced the culling that elephants have an inherent right to exist, and future generations should experience them in the wild.
- **MIKE Program** - Under CITES aims to
  - Help range States improve their ability to monitor elephant populations,
  - Detect changes in levels of illegal killing, and
  - Use this information to provide more effective law enforcement and

- Strengthen any regulatory measures required to support such enforcement.

Reference

The Hindu | Culling of Elephants

