

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 12-09-2024

Table of Content

India and GCC: Joint Action Plan for 2024-2028

New Act for Public Health Crisis

China Stops Short of Africa Debt Relief as it Pledges More Cash

Border Management and Development in India

Ground Realities of Passive Euthanasia in India

NEWS IN SHORT

Mission Mausam

Afghanistan set to begin work on TAPI pipeline

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana – IV

Expansion of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme

Salt Pans

National Florence Nightingale Awards 2024

INDIA AND GCC: JOINT ACTION PLAN FOR 2024-2028

Context

- India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held their **inaugural Foreign Ministers meeting** in Riyadh, where they adopted a **Joint Action Plan for 2024-2028**.

About

- This plan encompasses various collaborative activities in **health, trade, agriculture, food security, transportation, energy, and culture**.
- The plan allows for **additional cooperative areas** based on mutual agreement.
- EAM S. Jaishankar also held **separate bilateral meetings** with his counterparts from **Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain** on the margins of the India-GCC Ministerial meeting.

Gulf Region

- The Gulf Region typically refers to the countries surrounding the **Persian Gulf in the Middle East**.
- It includes nations like **Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.
- This region is known for its **vast oil reserves**, which have significantly influenced global economics and politics.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- It is a **political and economic alliance** of **six Middle Eastern countries**—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.
- It was established in **1981**.
- It is Headquartered at **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.



- It aims to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures.
- Presidency of the council rotates **annually**.

Importance of Gulf Region for India

- India's priorities include** attracting investments to increase economic growth, addressing regional security concerns (including in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf), and enhancing its regional presence and influence.
- Energy Security:** The Gulf countries are major suppliers of crude oil and natural gas to India.
 - India is highly dependent on Gulf oil for its energy needs, making the region crucial for India's energy security.
- Remittance:** Remittances from Indian expatriates working in the Gulf contribute significantly to India's economy.
 - Remittance is the non-commercial transfer of money by an individual to his/her home country or family.
- Security Cooperation:** The Gulf region is strategically important for India's security interests, given its location and influence in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean regions.

India's Relations with GCC

- Strategic Partnership:** GCC is a major trade and investment partner for India. While India has close economic and political ties with all countries, the strategic partnership exists with only Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman.
- Energy Security:** The Gulf region fulfilled **55.3% of India's total crude oil** demand in 2022–23, compared to 63.9% in 2021–22.
 - However, oil imports from Russia have been declining in 2023–24, and there are signs that India's decreasing dependence on Gulf oil is already reversing.
- Trade and Investment:** The GCC is **India's largest regional bloc trading partner**. Trade with the GCC comprised **15.8 percent of India's total trade in FY2022-23**, compared to 11.6 percent of total trade with the European Union.
 - The UAE has consistently been India's principal trading partner within the Gulf and is India's third-largest trading partner overall, with Saudi Arabia in fourth place.
 - India also has a significant trade deficit with the GCC which is driven by India's dependence on GCC countries for oil and gas imports.

- **India's regional geo-economic focus** has driven it to engage with the **I2U2 grouping and to join the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**.
 - ♦ The two sides signed an inter-governmental framework agreement on IMEC. However, both initiatives risk being delayed by the Hamas–Israel war.
- **Defence Relations:** India's defense engagements with these countries are gaining significant momentum.
 - ♦ The Indian Navy established bilateral exercises with the **UAE in 2018, with Qatar in 2019, and with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in 2021**.
 - ♦ The Indian Army held its first exercises with the UAE and Saudi Arabia in 2024.
 - ♦ The UAE is becoming India's key regional defence partner; the **UAE and Oman are the only regional countries** with which India holds army, air force and navy exercises.
 - ♦ **India and the UAE** have started trilateral military cooperation with France, holding a maritime exercise in 2023 and an air-force exercise in 2024.

Challenges Ahead

- **The outbreak of the Hamas–Israel war** and shipping attacks in the Red Sea directly impact India's energy security and economic growth.
 - ♦ Yet India remains reluctant to take an active role in the complex politics of the Middle East and is back to its long-standing **balancing act between the Gulf, Iran and Israel**. This could become more difficult if the war escalates further.
- The war has also impacted the **I2U2 minilateral group**, through the continued postponement of a senior-officials meeting since 2023.
 - ♦ India has called for economic initiatives such as I2U2 and IMEC to progress despite the conflict.
- Other challenges include **finalising the India–GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, which was initially delayed due to a change in the GCC's chief trade negotiator.
 - ♦ The key issue will be reaching an agreement that satisfies all GCC states.
- Additionally, India must manage diplomatic relations carefully following Islamophobic comments made by Indian officials in 2022.
 - ♦ Any Islamophobic rhetoric from Indian nationals stands in contrast to the growing

government-to-government display of religious tolerance between India and the Gulf.

Way Forward

- **Growing security challenges** are sharpening the need for India to become a key 'strategic partner' of the Gulf states and to enlarge its regional presence and influence.
- Increased strategic convergence spanning political, economic and security interests has resulted in a new framework for India–Gulf relations, which, if successfully maintained, will enhance trust levels and enable cooperation to become more ambitious in scope.

Source: ET

NEW ACT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

In Context

- An expert group constituted by NITI Aayog has proposed a **new Public Health Emergency Management Act (PHEMA)**.

About Public Health Emergency Management Act (PHEMA)

- It will address a range of public health issues, including epidemics, non-communicable diseases, disasters, and bioterrorism, through a holistic approach covering prevention, control, and disaster response.
- The Act would also provide for the creation of skilled public health cadres at national and state levels.
- **Priority Targets:** Developing human resources and infrastructure.
 - ♦ Creating innovative countermeasures and appropriate high-risk financing.
 - ♦ Strengthening regulatory frameworks and surveillance networks.
 - ♦ Connecting epidemiological, genomic, laboratory, and clinical data.

About Public Health Crisis : Challenges and Concern

- India, with its vast population and diverse healthcare landscape, faces several public health challenges.
- **Infectious diseases** : India grapples with infectious diseases that pose significant threats to public health. For example

- ♦ **The COVID-19** pandemic has strained healthcare systems, leading to overwhelmed hospitals, shortages of medical supplies, and loss of lives.
- ♦ **Vector-Borne Diseases:** Diseases like malaria, dengue, and chikungunya continue to affect large sections of the population.
- **Infrastructure :** India's healthcare infrastructure faces challenges related to funding, infrastructure gaps, and inadequate staffing.
 - ♦ Rural areas often lack proper medical facilities, leading to disparities in healthcare access.
- **Shortage of Healthcare Workers:** The shortage of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals exacerbates the crisis.
- **Malnutrition and Maternal Health:** Despite progress, malnutrition remains a significant concern.
 - ♦ India still grapples with high maternal mortality rates.
- **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) :** Diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular conditions are on the rise
- **Environmental Health:** India faces severe air pollution, especially in urban centers.
 - ♦ This contributes to respiratory diseases and other health issues.
- **India's public health spending : It** has been meager, hovering around 1% of GDP.
 - ♦ Despite recent increases bringing this closer to 2%, it remains inadequate when compared to global standards.

Initiatives

- **National Rural Health Mission (2005)** and **National Health Mission (2013)** focused on strengthening public sector health care.
- Recent policies emphasize publicly funded health insurance (PFHI) schemes like **PMJAY**
- **Economic survey data :** As a percent of GDP, expenditure on social services has increased from 6.7% in 2017-18 to 7.8% in 2023-24.
 - ♦ Correspondingly, health expenditure has increased from **1.4% to 1.9% in the same period.**
- **Budget Allocation:**

Highlights focusing on healthcare from Budget 2024-25

Rs.90,958.63 crore allocated to the Union Health Ministry.

- **Rs.87,656.90 crore** of this amount has been allocated to the health and family welfare department.
- **Rs.3,301.73 crore** of this amount has been allocated to the health research department.

Rs.4,523 crore has been allocated to All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi.

Customs duty exemptions announced on three cancer treatment drugs: Trastuzumab, Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, and Durvalumab.

Rs.90 crore has been allocated for the National Tele Mental Health Programme

Suggestions and Way Forward

- India's public health crisis demands a multi-pronged approach involving government policies, community participation, and international collaboration.
- Lessons need to be learnt from national and global experiences with COVID-19 to inform future preparedness and response strategies.
- To address the gaps exposed by the pandemic, there must be an increase in **public health funding**, focusing on both infrastructure and human resources.
 - ♦ **Strengthening the financial support** to states is crucial.
- **Establishing a strong surveillance network** and improving data management will be essential for effective public health responses.
- **Investing in the training and development of healthcare** professionals is vital.
- Establish health cadres at both national and state levels to improve emergency management.
- Create an Empowered Group of Secretaries on Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response (PPER), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, to coordinate responses.
- Build and maintain a trained workforce ready for rapid response during emergencies and ensure preparedness during peacetime.
- There is a need for establishment of a Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response Fund for effective and timely action.

Source: IE

CHINA STOPS SHORT OF AFRICA DEBT RELIEF AS IT PLEDGES MORE CASH

Context

- At the ninth edition of the **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)** China stopped short of providing the debt relief sought by many African countries, but pledged **360 billion yuan (\$50.7 billion)** over three years in credit lines and investments.

About

- The new funds will go towards **30 infrastructure projects** to improve trade links.
- China also said it will launch **30 clean energy projects in Africa**, offer cooperation on nuclear technology and tackle a power deficit that has delayed industrialisation efforts.

- **Ethiopia and Mauritius** announced new currency swap lines with China's central bank. Kenya will reopen the lending taps for key projects like its modern railway to link the region.

What is the FOCAC?

- The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was established in **2000** to formalize the strategic partnership between China and African nations.
 - ♦ It took on an enhanced role after the 2013 inception of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- A summit is conducted every three years, with the host alternating between China and an African member.
- The FOCAC has 53 African nations as its members – the entire continent except **Eswatini**, which has diplomatic ties with Taiwan against Beijing's "One China" Policy.

Concerns for India

- China's investments in infrastructure, energy, and other sectors in Africa can give Chinese companies **preferential access to African markets**.
- China's deepening ties with African nations can be seen as an expansion of its geopolitical influence, which could **challenge India's strategic interests**, particularly in the **Indian Ocean region**.
- The **debt-trap diplomacy** gives China additional economic and political leverage in Africa, making it harder for India to compete for investments and influence.
- China's **growing military presence** in Africa, including its base in Djibouti, poses security concerns for India.
- India's partnerships, like the **India-Africa Forum Summit**, are smaller in scale compared to China's FOCAC and BRI initiatives. This limits India's ability to counterbalance China's influence effectively.

Opportunities for India

- Africa has an annual infrastructure funding deficit estimated at **\$100 billion**, and needs transport links to make the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**.
 - ♦ AfCFTA is a trade agreement that aims to create a single market for goods and services across Africa. India can capitalize on AfCFTA by increasing trade and investment in the region.

- China has in recent years cut funding for such projects as it shifted focus to small projects, mainly due to its own **domestic economic pressures** and an increase in debt risks among African countries.
- India can **offer expertise in hospital management**, medical training, and digital health solutions. Collaboration on COVID-19 vaccine distribution has shown the potential of such partnerships in the past.
- India can scale up its capacity-building programs under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) initiative**, offering more scholarships and training opportunities to African students and professionals.
- India's leadership in **solar energy and its initiatives** under the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** provide a significant opportunity to support Africa's renewable energy goals.

Way Ahead

- India's approach should be based on capacity building, sustainable development, and people-centric partnerships, and offers an alternative to China's debt-driven model.
- Through strategic investments and partnerships, India can not only counterbalance China's dominance but also foster long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with African nations, reinforcing its role as a reliable development partner in the region.

Source: THE PRINT

BORDER MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Context

- While addressing the Border Area Development Conclave, Defence Minister said that **Border area development is the best way to deal with geo-strategic challenges**.

About

- India's geo-strategic position is such that it is exposed to different kinds of challenges and the best way to deal with them is to **ensure border area development**, as border villages are the country's first villages and not remote areas.
- He highlighted the **objective is to transform the villages along the Northern borders**, especially in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh, which are suffering from limited connectivity and infrastructure, into model villages.

Vibrant Village Programme

- The Union government approved the Vibrant Village Programme for **development of border villages as a Centrally sponsored scheme in 2023** for the financial years 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- It outlines the development of the 2,967 villages in 19 districts **bordering China and Nepal** in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The objective of VVP is **comprehensive development of these villages** to improve the quality of life of people and thereby reversing outmigration.
- It is also an effort to **counter China's model villages called Xiaokang** (moderately prosperous) villages opposite Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh very close to the LAC, raising apprehensions in the security establishment.

Borders in India

- India currently has **more than 15000 km of land borders** and **more than 7500 km of maritime borders**.
- It shares borders with **seven countries** including Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.



Border Management in India

- Border guarding responsibility initially was with the state forces post-independence, however, the same was found inadequate to handle the challenges and threats.
- **Central armed police forces (CAPFs)** were raised under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and were tasked to guard the borders under the control of the ministry.
- In case of active hostilities, the Army is given the responsibility to man the borders.

Pakistan & Bangladesh	· BSF (Border Security Forces)
China	· ITBP (Indo Tibetan Border Police)
Nepal & Bhutan	· SSB (Sasashtra Seema Bal)
Myanmar	· Assam Rifles (AR)

Need for Border Management

- **India- Pakistan Border:** The border with Pakistan has been a problematic one since India's independence.
 - ♦ Despite the accession of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to India as per the Indian Independence Act of 1947, Pakistan fought four conventional wars with India namely in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999.
 - ♦ It has also been engaged in a proxy war as well both in the state of J&K and Punjab.
 - ♦ The border is active in the form of LC where the Army has been deployed in addition to the BSF.
- **India- China Border:** India has disputed borders with China in Ladakh, Middle Sector, and in Arunachal Pradesh. Despite many levels of talks, very little progress has been made to resolve the dispute.
- **India-Bangladesh Border:** The relations between India and Bangladesh have been moving up and down based on the government in power.
 - ♦ The current relations with Bangladesh are good but Pakistani efforts to create a religious divide, Chinese inroads and present political situation in the country have made the peace process prone to disruption.
- **India-Bhutan Border:** India is responsible for the defence of Bhutan and therefore responds to Chinese aggression even in Bhutan which happened in Doklam in 2017.
 - ♦ The Chinese threat manifesting through Bhutan always remains which rises the need to secure this border.
- **India-Nepal Border:** Due to close relations between India and Nepal, Nepalese are working in the Indian Army as soldiers and porous border management remains a challenge.
 - ♦ Several Chinese activities in terms of infrastructure development have come up in Southern Nepal close to Indian borders.
 - ♦ Pakistan's ISI is also using the porous nature of this border to infiltrate militants for anti-national activities in India.
- **India-Myanmar Border:** India and Myanmar share a large land boundary with the northern end

bordering China and the southern end bordering Bangladesh.

- ♦ The border remains porous as local communities are divided into both sides of the border.
- ♦ There are a large number of refugees moving into the northeastern (NE) states, primarily in Manipur.

Challenges In Managing the Borders

- **Length and Diversity:** India shares borders with multiple countries totaling thousands of kilometers.
 - ♦ Each of these borders has unique geographical features, ranging from mountains to rivers and plains, making effective monitoring and control challenging.
- **Porosity of Borders:** Many parts of India's borders are porous, allowing illegal crossings of people, goods, and contraband such as drugs and weapons.
 - ♦ The difficult terrain, along with dense forests and riverine areas, facilitate such activities, posing a significant challenge to border security forces.
- **Cross-Border Terrorism:** India faces threats of cross-border terrorism, particularly from Pakistan-based militant groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - ♦ These groups exploit the porous borders to infiltrate into Indian territory and carry out attacks, leading to security concerns and tensions between the two countries.
- **Transnational Crime:** Transnational criminal activities, including smuggling of narcotics, arms, and counterfeit currency, thrive along India's borders.
- **Ethnic and Tribal Dynamics:** India's border regions are often inhabited by diverse ethnic and tribal communities with historical, cultural, and social ties across borders.
 - ♦ Managing these communities' aspirations, addressing their grievances, and preventing their exploitation by external forces require nuanced approaches to border management.
- **Dispute over Borders:** India has unresolved border disputes with neighboring countries, most notably with China and Pakistan.
 - ♦ These disputes lead to occasional tensions and confrontations, necessitating constant vigilance and diplomatic efforts to maintain peace and stability along the borders.

- **Infrastructure Development:** Many border areas in India lack basic infrastructure such as roads, communication networks, and border outposts, hampering the effectiveness of border management efforts.
 - ♦ Developing infrastructure in these remote and often inhospitable regions is crucial for enhancing surveillance capabilities and response mechanisms.
- **Humanitarian Concerns:** India shares borders with countries experiencing political instability, humanitarian crises, and refugee influxes.
 - ♦ Managing such situations while upholding humanitarian principles and international obligations poses additional challenges for border management authorities.

Conclusion

- **The Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has constructed over 8,500 kms of roads and more than 400 permanent bridges.
 - ♦ **Atal Tunnel, Sela Tunnel and Shikun-La Tunnel**, which is going to be the world's highest tunnel, will prove to be milestones in border area development.
- The transmission and distribution infrastructure of **north-eastern States** is being strengthened.
- Ongoing efforts have not only ensured prompt military deployments in sensitive regions, but have also **connected the people residing in border areas with the rest of the country.**
- Infrastructure development; smart borders comprising communication networks and power supply; economic development with employment generation; border area tourism and empowerment of the next generation by providing skill enhancement and education opportunities **are key pillars of the vision of border area development.**

Source: TH

GROUND REALITIES OF PASSIVE EUTHANASIA IN INDIA

Context

- The debate around the ethics and law that defines passive euthanasia was reignited after the Supreme Court dismissed the plea in Harish Rana's case, who has been in a permanent vegetative state since 2013.

What is Euthanasia?

- Euthanasia, is referred to as mercy killing or physician-assisted death i.e. deliberately ending someone's life, usually to relieve suffering.
- Ethicists differentiate between active and passive euthanasia.

Active Euthanasia

- Also known as **assisted suicide**, it refers to deliberately and actively doing something to end a person's life.
- This is done through methods like administering a **lethal injection** or giving an overdose of medication.
- Active euthanasia directly causes the patient's death. It is **illegal in most countries, including India.**

Passive Euthanasia

- It involves **intentionally letting a patient die by withholding artificial life support**, such as a ventilator or feeding tube.
- This can include removing a patient from life support or not providing treatment for a terminal illness.
- Passive euthanasia is **legal in some countries, including India**, under specific circumstances and with proper consent.

Status of Euthanasia in India

- **In 2011**, the Supreme Court for the first time recognised the legality of passive euthanasia in the case of **Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug v Union of India.**
- **In 2018**, the Supreme Court recognised the legality of 'passive euthanasia' for terminally-ill patients, holding that the **'right to die with dignity'** forms a part of the right to life under **Article 21** of the Constitution of India.
- The court also laid down detailed guidelines for passive euthanasia, both in cases where the patient left an **'advance directive'** or a 'living will' stating that life support should be withdrawn if they fall terminally ill, and in cases where no such directive was left behind.
- Among the guidelines was the condition that the **living will must be signed in the presence of two witnesses** and signed by a Judicial Magistrate.

- In the case of patients without a living will, the **family has to give their consent** for withdrawal of life support.
 - ♦ The court further eased norms for this process in January 2023.

Arguments in Favour of Euthanasia

- **End of Pain:** Euthanasia provides a way to relieve the intolerably extreme pain and suffering of an individual. It relieves the terminally ill people from a lingering death.
- **Respecting Person's Choice:** The essence of human life is to live a dignified life and to force the person to live in an undignified way is against the person's choice. Thus, it expresses the choice of a person which is a fundamental principle.
- **Treatment for others:** In many developing and underdeveloped countries like India, there is a lack of funds. There is a shortage of hospital space. So, the energy of doctors and hospital beds can be used for those people whose life can be saved instead of continuing the life of those who want to die.
- **Dignified Death:** Article 21 of the Indian Constitution clearly provides for living with dignity. A person has a right to live a life with at least minimum dignity and if that standard is falling below that minimum level then a person should be given a right to end his life.
- **Addressing Mental Agony:** The motive behind this is to help rather than harm. It not only relieves the unbearable pain of a patient but also relieves the relatives of a patient from the mental agony.

Ethical Challenges

- **Medical Ethics:** Medical ethics call for nursing, caregiving and healing and not ending the life of the patient.
 - ♦ In the present time, medical science is advancing at a great pace making even the most incurable diseases curable today.
- **Moral Wrong:** Taking a life is morally and ethically wrong. The value of life can never be undermined.

Concluding remarks

- Euthanasia challenges traditional views on death and medicine. Public discourse that considers religious, ethical, and cultural perspectives is crucial.
- Also there is a need for strict guidelines and safeguards are needed to prevent abuse or coercion.

- Ensuring access to quality palliative care, which focuses on comfort and symptom relief, should be a priority alongside any discussion of euthanasia.

Sources: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

MISSION MAUSAM

In News

- Cabinet approved 'Mission Mausam' to create a more weather-ready and climate-smart Bharat.

About Mission Mausam

- It is a two-year initiative aimed at enhancing India's capacity to cope with extreme weather and climate challenges.
- The mission, with a financial outlay of 2,000 crore, will be implemented under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
 - ♦ The **India Meteorological Department, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, and the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting**—institutions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences—will spearhead the mission's implementation.
 - ♦ **Key components** include expanding research in atmospheric sciences, focusing on weather surveillance, forecasting, and modelling.
 - ♦ The mission will integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and high-performance computing to improve the accuracy of weather predictions.
- **Importance :** It will enhance weather observation systems and provide better monsoon forecasts, air quality alerts, and extreme weather warnings.
 - ♦ The mission will benefit sectors including agriculture, disaster management, and health.

Source:TH

AFGHANISTAN SET TO BEGIN WORK ON TAPI PIPELINE

Context

- The Afghanistan government said that work would begin on a **\$10 billion** TAPI gas pipeline traversing South Asia.

About

- **The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI)** natural gas pipeline project is a significant regional energy initiative.
- It aims to transport up to **33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas** annually from the **Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan**, through a pipeline spanning approximately 1,800 kilometers.
- The route includes passing through key regions like **Herat and Kandahar in Afghanistan**, and **Balochistan in Pakistan**, before terminating in **Fazilka, Punjab**, in India.

Significance

- The project is designed to meet the growing energy needs of South Asia, with **Pakistan and India each expected to receive 42%** of the gas supplies, and **Afghanistan receiving 16%**.
- Afghanistan is also set to benefit from transit fees estimated at **\$500 million** annually, which could boost its economy.
- The TAPI project could enhance regional cooperation, boost energy security, and promote economic development across the participating countries.

Source:TH

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA – IV

Context

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **Implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana – IV (PMGSY-IV)** during FY 2024-25 to 2028-29.

About PMGSY-IV

- Under the scheme **25,000 unconnected habitations** of population size 500+ in plains, 250+ in NE & Hill States/UTs, special category areas (Tribal Schedule V, Aspirational Districts/Blocks, Desert areas) and 100+ in LWE affected districts, as per Census 2011 will be covered.
- Also, **62,500 Km of all-weather roads** will be provided to unconnected habitations.
- Construction of **required bridges** along the alignment of the all-weather road will also be provided.

PMGSY

- Government launched the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in **2000**.

- It aims to provide **all-weather access to unconnected habitations**.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development** along with state governments is responsible for the implementation of PMGSY.
- This scheme was centrally funded only up to 2015-16. Since then, the funds have been divided between the Centre and the State.

Source: IE

EXPANSION OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AROGYA YOJANA (AB PM-JAY)

In News

- The Union Cabinet has approved extending Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) health coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 and above, regardless of income.

Key Points

- Eligible senior citizens will receive a distinct card to access their entitled benefits.
- Seniors already covered by AB PM-JAY will receive an additional top-up of Rs. 5 lakh annually for themselves.
 - ◆ This top-up is separate from their family's existing coverage.
- **Options for Other Health Insurance Schemes:** Senior citizens covered under other public health insurance schemes such as the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), and Ayushman Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) can either retain their existing coverage or opt for AB PM-JAY.
 - ◆ Senior citizens under private health insurance or the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme are also eligible for AB PM-JAY benefits.

About AB PM-JAY

- AB PM-JAY is the world's largest publicly funded health assurance scheme.
- It provides Rs. 5 lakh annual coverage per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalizations.
- **Eligibility:** Based on Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) for rural and urban areas.
- The scheme is being implemented in 33 States/UTs except for the NCT of Delhi, West Bengal, and Odisha.

- **Expenses Covered:** Up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days of post-hospitalization expenses (e.g., diagnostics, medicines).
 - ♦ No restrictions on family size, age, or gender.
 - ♦ Coverage includes all pre-existing conditions from day one.
- **Achievements :** So far, it has facilitated over 7.37 crore hospital admissions, benefiting 55 crore individuals across 12.34 crore families.
 - ♦ Initially, the scheme covered 10.74 crore vulnerable families (40% of India's population).
 - In January 2022, the base was expanded to 12 crore families to account for population growth.
 - ♦ The recent extension also includes free healthcare for 37 lakh ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers, and Helpers (AWWs/AWHs) across the country.

Source: TH

PM ELECTRIC DRIVE REVOLUTION IN INNOVATIVE VEHICLE ENHANCEMENT (PM E-DRIVE) SCHEME

Context

- The Union Cabinet approved a new scheme called PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) for the promotion of electric vehicles (EV) in India.

About

- **The PM E-DRIVE will replace** Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (**FAME India Phase II**).
- The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) will implement the new scheme with a total outlay of **Rs 10,900 crore** over a period of two years.
- The scheme will focus on **promoting electric buses, trucks, and ambulances**. **Electric cars** for private or shared mobility will **not be covered** under this new scheme.
- The government has introduced **e-vouchers for EV buyers** to avail of demand incentives under the scheme.
 - ♦ These vouchers will be generated at the time of purchase and **authenticated via Aadhaar**, ensuring transparency in the subsidy process.

Major components of the scheme

- Subsidies/Demand incentives worth **Rs.3,679 crore** have been provided to incentivize

electric two-wheelers, electric three-wheelers, e-ambulances, e-trucks and other emerging EVs.

- The scheme will support **24.79 lakh e-2Ws, 3.16 lakh e-3Ws, and 14,028 e-buses**.
- The scheme allocates **Rs.500 crore** for the deployment of **e-ambulances**.
- A sum of **Rs.4,391 crore** has been provided for procurement of **14,028 e-buses** by STUs/public transport agencies.
- **Rs.500 crore** has been allocated for incentivising e-trucks.
 - ♦ Incentives will be given to those who have a scrapping certificate from MoRTH approved vehicles scrapping centers (RVSF).
- The scheme proposes the installation of **22,100 fast chargers for e-4 Ws, 1800 fast chargers for e-buses and 48,400 fast chargers for e-2W/3Ws**.
- The outlay for electric vehicle public charging stations (EVPCS) will be **Rs.2,000 crore**.

Significance of the Scheme

- The scheme promotes an efficient, competitive and resilient **EV manufacturing industry** thereby promoting Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
 - ♦ This will be achieved by incorporating a **phased manufacturing programme (PMP)** which encourages domestic manufacturing and strengthening of EV supply chain.
- The initiative is poised to **address concerns regarding environmental pollution and fuel security** as well as to make significant progress in promoting sustainable transportation solutions.
- The scheme shall **create significant employment opportunities** along the value chain.

Other initiatives for Electric Vehicle mobility in India

- **Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024 (EMPS)** with an outlay of 778 Crore for a period 6 months (April 2024-September 2024) which provides incentives to buyers of e-2W and e-3W.
- **Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Automobile and Auto Component Industry (PLI-AAT)** with a budgetary outlay of 25,938 Crore.
 - ♦ The scheme incentivises various categories of electric vehicles including e-2W, e-3W, e-4W, e-buses & e-trucks also.
- **Production Linked Incentive Scheme for manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cell (PLI-ACC)** in the country with a budgetary outlay of 18,100 Crore.

- **Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars** to attract investments from global EV manufacturers and promote India as a manufacturing destination for e-vehicles.

Source: PIB

SALT PANS

Context

- The Union Government approved the **transfer of 256 acres of salt pan land** in Mumbai to the Dharavi Redevelopment Project Pvt Ltd (DRPPL).
 - ◆ This invited **criticism** from opposition leaders and environmentalists due to environmental concerns.

Salt Pans

- They comprise **parcels of low-lying lands** where seawater flows in at certain times, and leaves behind **salt and other minerals**.
- Along with mangroves, this ecosystem is **instrumental in protecting the city from flooding**.
- According to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), the ecologically sensitive salt pans fall under **CRZ-1B category**, where no economic activity is allowed with the exception of salt extraction and natural gas exploration.

- Nationally, some **60,000 acres** have been demarcated as salt pan lands, spread across Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Gujarat, and Karnataka.
- **Andhra Pradesh** boasts the largest expanse of such land, followed by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

Source: IE

NATIONAL FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AWARDS 2024

Context

- The President of India has conferred the National Florence Nightingale Awards 2024 to Nurses at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.

National Florence Nightingale Awards

- The Award was instituted by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in the year **1973**.
- This award is given as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by the **nurses and nursing professionals** to society.
- Each **award consists** of a Certificate of Merit, Cash Award of Rs. 1,00,000/- and a medal.

Source: PIB