

Insights Daily Current Affairs + PIB: 06 March 2019

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Relevant articles from PIB:

Paper 1:

| Topics Covered:

1. Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Swachh Bharat Grameen

What to study?

- **For Prelims: About SBM- G- key facts, objectives and targets.**
- **For Mains: Significance and achievements of the scheme, what else needs to be done?**

Context: The **National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2018-19**, conducted by an Independent Verification Agency (IVA) under the World Bank support project to the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G), has found that **96.5% of the households in rural India who have access to a toilet use it.**

Background:

- The survey was conducted between November 2018 and February 2019 and covered 92040 households in 6136 villages across States and UTs of India.
- **The survey used the PPS (Probability Proportion to Size) sampling methodology**, which yields results within a confidence interval of 95%.

Key findings:

- The NARSS confirmed the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of 90.7% of villages which were previously declared and verified as ODF by various districts/States.
- 1% of households were found to have access to toilets during the survey period (the corresponding figure as per the SBMG MIS in November 2018 was 96%)
- 5% of the people who had access to toilets used them.
- 7% of villages which were previously declared and verified as ODF were confirmed to be ODF. The remaining villages also had sanitation coverage of

about 93%.

- 4% of the villages surveyed found to have minimal litter and minimal stagnant water.

Impact and significance of SBM:

- Since its launch in October 2014, the SBM, the world's largest sanitation program, has changed the behaviour of hundreds of millions of people with respect to toilet access and usage.
- 500 million people have stopped defecating in the open since the SBM began, down from 550 million at the beginning of the programme to less than 50 million today.
- Over 9 crore toilets have been built across rural India under the Mission. Over 5.5 lakh villages and 615 districts have been declared ODF, along with 30 ODF States and Union Territories.

About SBM:

To accelerate the efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation, the Prime Minister of India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October, 2014.

The Mission Coordinator for SBM is Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) with two Sub-Missions, the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). Together, they aim to achieve Swachh Bharat by 2019, as a fitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th Birth Anniversary.

The ***aim of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) is to achieve a clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2nd October, 2019.***

Objectives:

- To bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas, by promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation.
- To motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness creation and health education.
- To encourage cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation.
- To develop community managed sanitation systems focusing on scientific Solid & Liquid Waste Management systems for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.
- To create significant positive impact on gender and promote social inclusion by improving sanitation especially in marginalized communities.

Mains Question: The success of Swachh Bharat mission lies in the behavioural change it has managed to bring, more than anything else. Critically analyze.

Paper 3:

| Topics Covered:

1. Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions.

“Transport and Marketing Assistance” (TMA) for specified agriculture products scheme

What to study?

- ***For Prelims: Key features of the scheme.***
- ***For Mains: Significance and the need for the scheme.***

Context: The Centre has notified a scheme for **Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) for specified agriculture products** that will provide assistance for the international component of freight and marketing of agricultural produce.

Highlights:

1. The scheme will be available for exports effected from March 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.
2. **Eligibility:** All exporters, duly registered with relevant Export Promotion Council as per Foreign Trade Policy, of eligible agriculture products shall be covered under this scheme.
3. **Exceptions: The assistance** is available for most agricultural product exports with some exceptions such as live animals, products of animal origin, milk, cream, curd, butter, buttermilk, whey, rice, wheat, tobacco and garlic.
4. The assistance, at notified rates, will be **available for export of eligible agriculture products to the permissible countries, as specified from time to time**. The assistance shall be admissible only if payments for the exports are received in Free Foreign Exchange through normal banking channels.
5. The scheme shall be admissible for exports made **through EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) ports only**.
6. The scheme **covers freight and marketing assistance for export by air as well as by sea**.

Impact of the scheme:

This scheme is likely to mitigate the disadvantage of higher cost of transportation of export of specified agriculture products due to trans-shipment and to promote brand recognition for Indian agricultural products in the specified overseas markets.

Paper 2:

| Topics Covered:

1. Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: The scheme- features, significance, need and potential.

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched a pension scheme called **Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan Yojana (PM-SYM)**. The scheme was announced in the Union Budget in February this year.

About Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana:

PM-SYM is **a voluntary and contributory pension scheme** that will engage as many as 42 crore workers in the unorganised sector.

Eligibility:

1. The unorganised sector workers, with income of less than Rs 15,000 per month and who belong to the entry age group of 18-40 years, will be eligible for the scheme.
2. Those workers should not be covered under New Pension Scheme (NPS), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme or Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
3. He or she should not be an income tax payer.

Benefits:

Minimum Assured Pension: Each subscriber under the scheme will receive minimum assured pension of Rs 3000 per month after attaining the age of 60 years.

In case of death during receipt of pension: If the subscriber dies during the receipt of pension, his or her spouse will be entitled to receive 50 percent of the pension as family pension. This family pension is applicable only to spouse.

In case of death before the age of 60 years: If a beneficiary has given regular contribution and dies before attaining the age of 60 years, his or her spouse will be entitled to continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or may even exit the scheme.

Contribution to the scheme:

Contribution by the Subscriber: The subscriber is required to contribute the prescribed contribution amount from the age of joining the scheme till the age of 60 years.

Medium of contribution: The subscriber can contribute to the PM-SYM through 'auto-debit' facility from his or her savings bank account or from his or her Jan- Dhan account.

Equal contribution by the Central Government: Under the PM-SYM, the prescribed age-specific contribution by the beneficiary and the matching contribution by the Central Government will be made on a '50:50 basis'.

Relevant articles from various News Papers:

Paper 2 and 3:

Topics Covered:

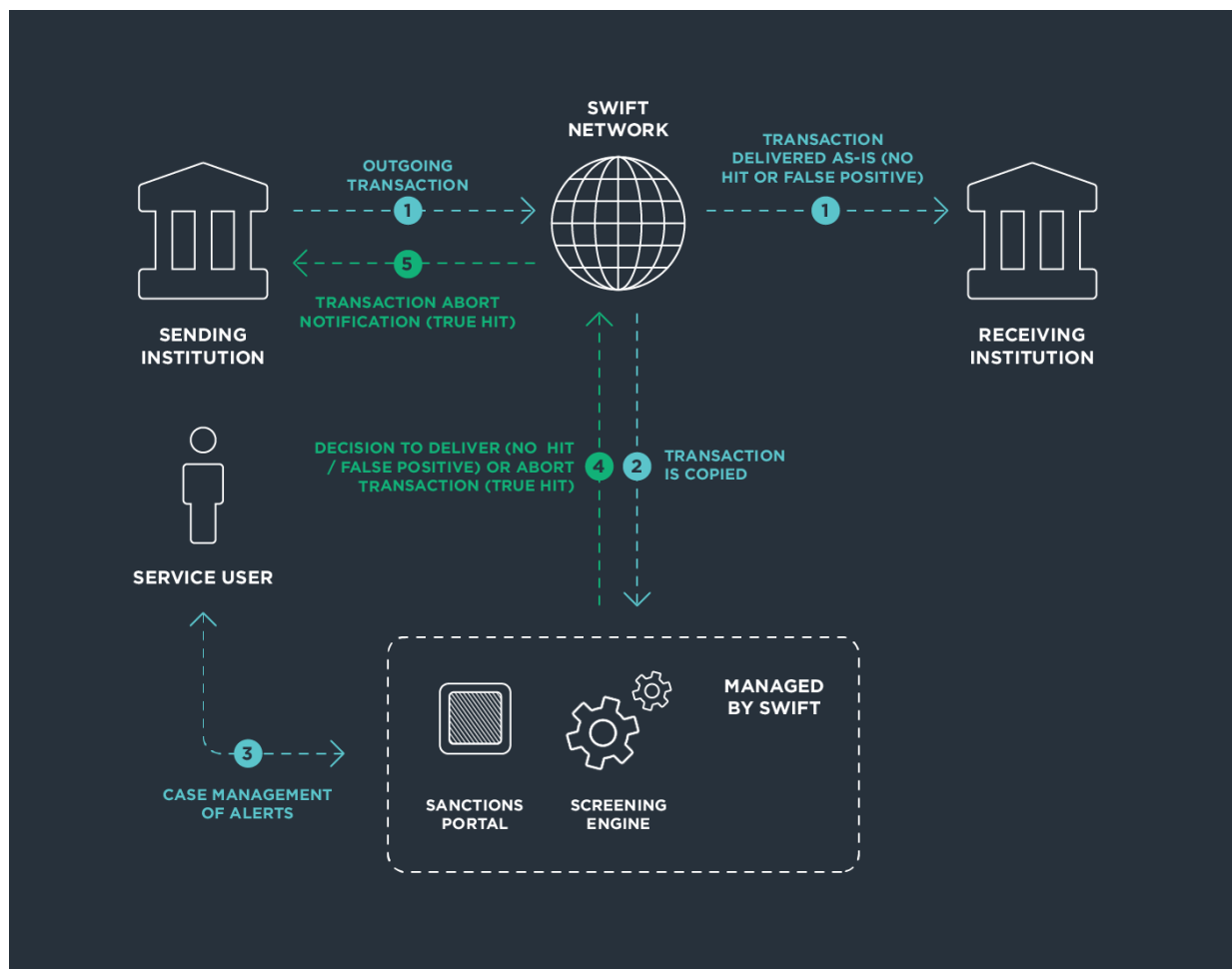
1. Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.
2. Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)

What to study?

- **For Prelims: SWIFT- objectives, features and significance.**
- **For Mains: Significance, need for SWIFT.**

Context: Half a dozen public and private sector banks have been slapped with monetary penalties by the Reserve Bank of India for non-compliance of directions in the **Swift (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) messaging system** used by banks worldwide for foreign currency transfers.



What is SWIFT?

It is **a messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information and instructions through a standardized system of codes**. Under SWIFT, each financial organization has a unique code which is used to send and receive payments.

- **SWIFT does not facilitate funds transfer:** rather, it sends payment orders, which must be settled by correspondent accounts that the institutions have with each other.
- **The SWIFT is a secure financial message carrier** — in other words, it transports messages from one bank to its intended bank recipient.
- **Its core role is to provide a secure transmission channel** so that Bank A knows that its message to Bank B goes to Bank B and no one else. Bank B, in turn, knows that Bank A, and no one other than Bank A, sent, read or altered the message en route. Banks, of course, need to have checks in place before actually sending messages.

Facts for Prelims:

SWIFT India is a joint venture of top Indian public and private sector banks and SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication). The company was created to deliver high quality domestic financial messaging services to the Indian financial community. It has a huge potential to contribute significantly to the financial community in many domains.

Significance of SWIFT:

- Messages sent by SWIFT's customers are authenticated using its specialised security and identification technology.
- Encryption is added as the messages leave the customer environment and enter the SWIFT Environment.
- Messages remain in the protected SWIFT environment, subject to all its confidentiality and integrity commitments, throughout the transmission process while they are transmitted to the operating centres (OPCs) where they are processed — until they are safely delivered to the receiver.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2:

| Topics Covered:

1. Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

UN Security Council

What to study?

- **For Prelims: About UNSC- composition, objectives and functions.**
- **For Mains: Role and significance of UNSC, need for UNSC reforms, why India**

should be given permanent membership?

Context: France, which assumed the Presidency of the United Nations Security

Council for the month of March, has reiterated its support for India as the permanent member of the powerful UN body. The nation also reiterated its support for Germany and Japan as permanent members of an expanded UNSC.

About UNSC:

What is it?

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the organs of the United Nations and is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions; it is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

Members:

The Security Council consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States—serve as the body's ***five permanent members***. These permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General.

The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms. The body's presidency rotates monthly among its members.

Proposed reforms:

Reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) encompasses five key issues:

categories of membership, the question of the veto held by the five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship. There is also a proposal to admit more permanent members.

India's demands:

India has been calling for the reform of the UN Security Council along with Brazil, Germany and Japan for long, emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.

Why India should be given a permanent seat in the council?

1. India was among the founding members of United Nations.
2. It is the second largest and a one of the largest constant contributor of troops to United Nations Peacekeeping missions.
3. Today, India has over 8,500 peacekeepers in the field, more than twice as many as the UN's five big powers combined.

4. India, since long time, has been demanding expansion of UNSC and its inclusion as permanent member in it. It has been a member of UNSC for 7 terms and a member of G-77 and G-4, so permanent membership is a logical extension.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3:

| Topics Covered:

1. Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

World Air Quality Report 2018

What to study?

- ***For Prelims: Highlights of the report.***
- ***For Mains: Concerns for India, what needs to be done?***






Context: IQAir AirVisual and Greenpeace have released ***World Air Quality Report 2018***.

The main objective behind the report was to measure the presence of fine particulate matter known as Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, which has been recorded in real-time in 2018.

Highlights of the report:

- The report, based on a study of 3000 cities, said that ***64 percent of the cities exceeded the World Health Organisation's annual exposure guideline for PM 2.5***. In South Asia itself, 99 percent of the cities exceeded the WHO's safe standard exposure of 10 micrograms/cubic metre annually.
- ***Of the 10 cities with highest pollution, seven are in India***, while one is in China and two are in Pakistan.
- ***India's Gurugram led the list of most polluted cities in the world in 2018***, followed by Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Noida, and Bhiwadi in the top six worst-affected cities.
- ***Delhi was ranked at number 11*** on the pollution chart.
- ***Among the top 30 most polluted cities, India makes up for 22*** with five in China, two in Pakistan and one in Bangladesh.
- ***The only non-Indian city in the top five list is Faisalabad, Pakistan***.
- ***Delhi was ranked as the most polluted capital in the world***, with Dhaka at second and Kabul at third position.
- China made a remarkable improvement since 2013 as the country's pollution levels have gone down by 40 percent. In 2013, Beijing topped the pollution charts. Beijing ranks now as the 122nd most polluted city in the world in 2018.
- In South Asia, out of 20 most polluted cities in the world, 18 are in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

- ***In Southeast Asia, Jakarta and Hanoi are the most polluted cities .***

Rank	City	2017 AVG	2018 AVG
1	 Gurugram, India	145.8	135.8
2	 Ghaziabad, India	144.6	135.2
3	 Faisalabad, Pakistan	—	130.4
4	 Faridabad, India	123	128.1
5	 Bhiwadi, India	—	125.4
6	 Noida, India	134	123.6
7	 Patna, India	118.5	119.7
8	 Hotan, China	91.9	116
9	 Lucknow, India	119.2	115.7
10	 Lahore, Pakistan	133.2	114.9

Measures to improve air quality:

As suggested by Greenpeace, following measures can be employed to fight air pollution in the country:

- Improving public transport.
- Limiting the number of polluting vehicles on the road.
- Introducing less polluting fuel (Bharat VI).
- Strict emission regulations.
- Improved efficiency for thermal power plants and industries.
- Moving from diesel generators to rooftop solar.
- Increased use of clean renewable energy.
- Electric vehicles.
- Removing dust from roads.
- Regulating construction activities.
- Stopping biomass burning, etc.

Sources: the hindu.

Mains Question: Air Pollution in India can no longer be tackled with short term, reactive solutions. Critically analyze.

Paper 2:

| Topics Covered:

1. Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.
2. Transparency related issues.

All about Form 26

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: What is Form 26, why was it introduced, it's relevance and significance.

Context: Recently, the Law Ministry made it mandatory for election candidates to reveal their income-tax returns of the last five years, as well as the details of their offshore assets. ***This was done by amending Form 26***, after the Election Commission of India wrote to the Ministry on February 13.

What is Form 26?

A candidate in an election is required to file an affidavit called Form 26 that furnishes information on her assets, liabilities, educational qualifications, criminal antecedents (convictions and all pending cases) and public dues, if any. The affidavit has to be filed along with the nomination papers and should be sworn before an Oath Commissioner or Magistrate of the First Class or before a Notary Public.

The objective behind introducing Form 26 was that it would help voters make an informed decision. The affidavit would make them aware of the criminal activities of a candidate, which could help prevent people with questionable backgrounds from being elected to an Assembly or Parliament.

When and how was it introduced?

Like most recent electoral reforms in India, Form 26 was introduced following a court order. The genesis of the affidavit can be traced to the 170th Report of the Law Commission, submitted in May 1999, which suggested steps for preventing criminals from entering electoral politics. One of the suggestions was to disclose the criminal antecedents as well as the assets of a candidate before accepting her nomination.

What has changed?

Earlier, a candidate had to only declare the last I-T return (for self, spouse and dependents). Details of foreign assets were not sought. Offshore assets, as per the February 26 notification, means ***“details of all deposits or investments in foreign banks and any other body or institution abroad and details of all assets and liabilities in foreign countries”***. It is now ***mandatory for candidates to reveal their own income-tax returns of the last five years rather than only one, and the details of offshore assets, as well as the same details for their spouse, members of the Hindu Undivided Family*** (if the candidate is a karta or coparcener), and dependents.

Sources: Indian express.

Facts for Prelims:

AL NAGAH 2019:

Context: Exercise Al Nagah III, third in the series of bilateral joint exercise between India and Oman is scheduled to be held from 12 to 25 March 2019 at ***Jabel Al Akhdar Mountains in Oman.***

The exercise will see both the armies exchanging expertise and experience in tactics, weapon handling and firing, with an aim to enhance interoperability in counterterrorist operations in semi urban mountainous terrain.

Institutions in News- NALSA:

Why in News? President Nominates Justice SA Bobde As NALSA Executive Chairman.

About NALSA:

NALSA has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society. The aim is to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reasons of economic or other disabilities.

As per section 3(2) of Legal Service Authorities Act, the Chief Justice of India shall be the Patron-in-Chief. and a serving or retired Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the President, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, shall be the Executive Chairman.

Important functions performed by NALSA:

- NALSA organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes.
- NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes.
- Services provided by the agency include free legal aid in civil and criminal matters for the poor and marginalised people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer in any court or tribunal.
- Free legal services include provision of aid and advice to beneficiaries to access the benefits under the welfare statutes and schemes and to ensure access to justice in any other manner.

Summaries of important Editorials:

Generalised System of Preferences:

Link: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/life-without-gsp/article26440531.ece>.

Summary: The section discusses about recent announcement made by US on the application of GSP, its effects on India and implications of this move.

Context: United States has decided to “terminate” India’s designation as a beneficiary of its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).

What made US announce this?

The US observed that India has implemented a wide array of trade barriers that create serious negative effects on United States commerce. Despite intensive engagement, India has failed to take the necessary steps to meet the GSP criterion.

Background:

The US had launched an eligibility review of India's compliance with the GSP market access criterion in April 2018, following concerns raised by its medical devices and dairy industry. The Indian government's attempts to arrive at a "balanced" package that would address the US's concerns and protect the Indian public's welfare were not successful.

In 2017, India had capped prices of cardiac stents and knee implants, slashing these over 70% and 60% respectively. The move impacted US giants like Abbott, Medtronic, Boston Scientific and Stryker.

Concerns:

This could be a big blow for India's competitiveness in items groups such as garments, engineering, and intermediary goods in the American market.

This could impact India's competitiveness in items groups such as raw materials in the organic chemicals sector and intermediary goods in the US market, alongside items such as iron or steel, furniture, aluminum and electrical machinery.

How India benefitted from GSP?

India has been the biggest beneficiary of the GSP regime and accounted for over a quarter of the goods that got duty-free access into the US in 2017. Exports to the US from India under GSP — at \$5.58 billion — was over 12 per cent of India's total goods exports of \$45.2 billion to the US that year. The US goods trade deficit with India was \$22.9 billion in 2017.

What is GSP?

The GSP, the largest and oldest US trade preference programme, is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries.

It aims to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.

It was instituted on January 1, 1976, and authorised under the US Trade Act of 1974.

What is the objective of GSP?

The objective of GSP was to give development support to poor countries by promoting exports from them into the developed countries. GSP promotes sustainable development in beneficiary countries by helping these countries to

increase and diversify their trade with the United States. GSP provide opportunities for many of the world's poorest countries to use trade to grow their economies and climb out of poverty.

Possible impact:

India's Department of Commerce feels the impact is "minimal", given that Indian exporters were only receiving duty-free benefits of \$190 million on the country's overall GSP-related trade of \$5.6 billion.

Some experts feel the move will not have a major impact on India also because it has been diversifying its market in the Latin American and the African region and its trade with countries of the Global South has also been expanding at a "very competitive pace".

At the same time, the move could hit Indian exporters if it gives an edge to competitors in its top export categories to the US.