

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY



1950

- It has been observed annually on January 25 **since 2011** to commemorate the foundation day of the **Election Commission of India**, i.e. on **January 25, 1950**
- It aims to underline the **centrality of the voter and raise electoral awareness** among citizens and inspire their **active participation** in the democratic process.
- It also promotes the **enrolment of new voters**, particularly young individuals who have recently become eligible. Across the country, new voters are honored and presented with their **Elector Photo Identity Card (EPIC)** during **NVD ceremonies**.
- This Year's Theme **"Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure"** is a continuation of last year's theme emphasizing the importance of participation in the electoral process and encouraging voters to take pride in exercising their franchise.

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION (NHM): TRANSFORMING PUBLIC HEALTH IN INDIA

- NHM is a program in India that aims to provide quality healthcare services to all people.
- **Background - Launch and Evolution**
 - The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was launched in 2005 to build accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare systems for rural populations, particularly vulnerable groups, up to the District Hospital (DH) level.
 - In 2012, the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) was introduced, and the NRHM was rebranded as the National Health Mission (NHM), consisting of two sub-missions: NRHM and NUHM.
- **Goals**
 - Ensure universal access to quality healthcare services
 - Provide healthcare services that are affordable and equitable

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

- Provide healthcare services that are responsive to people's needs
 - Ensure that healthcare services are accountable
 - Advance towards meeting Sustainable Development Goal 3
 - **Implementation Strategy**
 - The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** provides financial and technical support to states and union territories to ensure accessible, affordable, accountable, and effective healthcare up to the DH level.
 - **Key Components of NHM**
 - **Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A):** Focuses on improving maternal and child health, reducing child mortality, and enhancing nutritional outcomes.
 - **Health Systems Strengthening:** Includes the improvement of healthcare facilities, human resources for health, and governance structures.
 - **Non-Communicable Disease Control Programmes:** Focuses on healthcare for diseases that cannot be transmitted
 - **Communicable Disease Control Programmes:** Focuses on healthcare for diseases that can be transmitted
 - **Infrastructure maintenance:** This component supports salary requirements for family welfare schemes, including training centers and health posts, with GOI approval for new ones.
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CROSSPATHY IN INDIA

- Crosspathy refers to the practice where medical practitioners trained in one system of medicine (e.g., Ayurveda, Homeopathy, or Unani) prescribe medicines or perform treatments from another system (primarily Allopathy, or modern medicine).
- This practice is a significant issue in India's healthcare sector due to its implications for patient safety, legal frameworks, and medical ethics.

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

Legal and Regulatory Framework:

- **Permissibility:**
 - Crosspathy is generally deemed illegal unless explicitly authorized by state laws or special government orders.
- **Judicial Rulings:**
 - The Supreme Court of India has ruled that practicing medicine outside one's expertise without explicit authorization amounts to **medical negligence**.
 - Crosspathy practitioners have faced legal actions under the Indian Medical Council Act and other state-specific medical laws.

Reasons Behind Crosspathy in India:

- **Doctor Shortages:**
 - India faces a critical shortage of allopathic doctors, especially in rural areas, with an 80% shortfall of specialists in Community Health Centres (CHCs) as of 2022-23.
 - AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy) practitioners are often utilized to fill this gap.
- **Policy Gaps:**
 - Some states have allowed limited crosspathy to address accessibility challenges, such as in Maharashtra and Goa.
- **Economic Factors:**
 - Patients in rural areas often cannot afford specialist doctors or urban healthcare facilities, making AYUSH practitioners a more accessible option.

Challenges & Criticism:

- **Patient Safety:**
 - Crosspathy practitioners may lack comprehensive training in modern medicine, increasing risks of incorrect diagnoses, improper prescriptions, and complications.
- **Legal Ambiguity:**

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

- Conflicting laws and court rulings create confusion about what constitutes permissible crosspathy.
- Regulatory oversight is often weak, particularly in rural areas.
- **Professional Conflicts:**
 - The Indian Medical Association (IMA) strongly opposes crosspathy, citing it as a dilution of healthcare standards.

AIRPORT ECONOMIC REGULATORY AUTHORITY (AERA)



AERA is a **statutory body** constituted under the **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008**.

- It was set up on the **recommendations of the Naresh Chandra Committee** to prepare the road map for the civil aviation sector, which can take care of the interests of the service providers as well as those of the consumers.
- It is an **independent regulatory body** tasked with **overseeing the economic regulation of major airports** in India.
- **Headquarters: Delhi**

Function: It **regulates tariffs and other charges** (development fee and passenger service fee) **for aeronautical services** (air traffic management, landing, and parking of aircraft, ground handling services) **at major airports**.

- For the remaining airports, tariffs are determined by the **Airports Authority of India (AAI)**.
- Its **main objectives** include **creating a level playing field**, fostering healthy competition among major airports, **promoting investment in airport** facilities, and regulating tariffs for aeronautical services.

Major airports:

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

- The 2008 Act designates an airport as a major airport if it has an annual passenger traffic of at least 15 lakhs.
- An amendment to the act in 2019 increased this threshold to **35 lakh annual passengers**.

CHANDRA X-RAY OBSERVATORY



An international team of researchers using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) and the Chandra X-ray Observatory has discovered a bizarre black hole that may provide insights into the genesis and growth of supermassive black holes.

- It is one of NASA's **premier space telescopes** specially designed to **detect X-ray emission from very hot regions of the Universe** such as exploded stars, clusters of galaxies, and matter around black holes.
- It was **launched on July 23, 1999**, aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia (STS-93).
- It is **part of NASA's fleet of "Great Observatories"** along with the Hubble Space Telescope, the Spitzer Space Telescope and the now deorbited Compton Gamma Ray Observatory.
- Because **X-rays are absorbed by Earth's atmosphere**, **Chandra must orbit above it**, up to an altitude of 139,000 km (86,500 mi) in space.
- It is the **world's most powerful X-ray telescope**. It has **eight-times greater resolution** and is able to detect sources more than 20-times fainter than any previous X-ray telescope.
- Chandra allows scientists from around the world to obtain X-ray images of exotic environments to **help understand the structure and evolution of the universe**.

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

CHINAR TREE



- **Scientific name:** Platanus orientalis
- It is also known as **Oriental plane tree, maple tree** and locally it is called as **Boueen**, named after the Hindu goddess **Bhavani**.
- It is the **State tree** of the Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is a large, well spreading **deciduous tree** growing up to a height of 30 meters and girth of 10 to 15 meters at ground level.
- It takes around 30 to 50 years for the trees to reach their mature height and around 150 years for them to grow to their full size.
- It is the **only species of the Platanaceae family found in India** and grows **throughout the Kashmir valley**.
- The tree's leaves **change colors with the seasons**, transforming from **deep green** in summer to vibrant shades of **red, amber, and yellow in autumn**.
- **Uses:** The tree has several properties - leaves and bark are **used as medicine**, the wood, known as lace wood is used for delicate interior furniture and the **twigs & roots** are used for **making dyes**.

Geotagging of Chinar:

- Under the geo-tagging process, **QR codes are attached to each surveyed tree**, recording information about 25 characteristics, including its geographical location, health, age and growing patterns, enabling conservationists to track changes and address risk factors.
- The project, spearheaded by **J&K Forest Research Institute (FRI)** of J&K Forest Department involves geo-tagging and QR coding of Chinar trees to enable their monitoring and management.
- The geotagging of the majestic Chinars have proved that these trees are much older than what were claimed, to be 700 years old. Some are **more than 1000 years old**.

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

SUKANYA SAMRIDDHI YOJANA (SSY)



This year marks the 10 years of Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana encouraging families to invest in the bright futures of their daughters, fostering a culture of inclusion and progress.

- It is a **savings scheme** launched back in **2015** as part of the Government initiative, **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** campaign.
- This scheme enables **guardians to open a savings account for their girl child** with an authorized commercial bank or India-Post branch.

Eligibility:

- The applicant must be a citizen of India.
- The account can be opened by a parent or legal guardian of the girl's child.
- The girl child must be below the age of 10 years.
- Only one account is allowed for a girl child.
- A family can open only 2 SSY scheme accounts.
- NRIs are not eligible to open these accounts.

Key Features:

- **Minimum & Maximum Deposit:**
 - Investment of **minimum Rs. 250** and **maximum Rs. 1.5 lakh** in a **financial year**. Subsequent deposits in multiples of Rs. 100.
 - **No limit on the number of deposits** either in a month or in a Financial Year.
- **Tenure:** The maturity period of SSY is **21 years from the account opening**. However, **contributions** have to be **made for the first 15 years only**. Thereafter, the SSY account will continue to earn interest until maturity.

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

- The SSY account will be **mandatorily operated by the girl child** after she attains the **age of 18 years**.
- Interest on SSA as **announced by Govt. of India every quarter** will be applicable and **compounded annually**.
- **Partial withdrawal:**
 - Withdrawal shall be allowed **after the account holder attains the age of eighteen years or has passed the tenth standard**, whichever is earlier.
 - **For higher education 50% of the balance** at the end of the previous financial year can be withdrawn. **For marriage of adult account holder, 100% withdrawals**
- **Premature Closure: Allowed in the event of death** of the depositor or in cases of extreme compassionate grounds such as medical support in life threatening diseases to be authorized by an order by the Central Government.

Tax Benefits: On investing in this scheme, **tax exemption** is also available **under Section 80C** of the Income Tax

Act. The **amount invested, interest earned and maturity amount is tax free.**

FOREVER CHEMICALS



The European Commission intends to propose a ban on the use of PFAS, or “forever chemicals”, in consumer products, with exemptions for essential industrial uses.

- **Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)** are toxic, man-made, hazardous chemicals that have dangerous effects on **environment and health of all organisms** including human beings.
- They are called “**forever chemicals**” because of their tendency to **stay in the environment virtually**

Current Affairs - 23 January 2025

- PFAs **can migrate** to the soil, water and air during their production and use.
- These are listed in the **Stockholm Convention**.

Applications: They are used in thousands of items, from **cosmetics** and **non-stick pans** to **aircraft** and **wind turbines**, due to their **resistance to extreme temperatures** and **corrosion**.

Impacts of PFAS on human health: A variety of health risks that are attributed to PFA exposure, including **decreased fertility**, **developmental effects in children**, **interference with body hormones**, **increased cholesterol** levels and increased **risk of some cancers**.
