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ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

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# 1 - Credit Assistance Program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras:

## GS II

### Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**
- Recently, the Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare, inaugurated a credit assistance program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras (JAK), aiming to enhance accessibility to affordable medicines across India.
- As a part of the program a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI) to provide financial assistance and support infrastructure development for JAKs.
- **What is the Credit Assistance Program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras?**
- The Government of India under this program will provide credit/loan assistance to operators/entrepreneurs running Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country.
- The credit assistance program utilizes both Goods and Services Tax (GST) and India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to offer unsecured working capital loans to small businesses.
- Through this program, operators can access unsecured working capital loans and infrastructure funding to establish and maintain their Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
- The program seeks to empower small entrepreneurs, enhance the accessibility of affordable medicines, and strengthen the healthcare ecosystem in India.
- **What are Jan Aushadhi Kendras?**
- **About:**
- Jan Aushadhi Kendras (JAKs) is a government initiative launched to provide affordable and quality medicines to the public.
- They operate under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) scheme of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- **PMBJP Scheme:**
- The Jan Aushadhi Scheme, revamped as Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana (PMJAY) in September 2015, aimed to make quality medicines available at affordable prices, particularly for the poor and disadvantaged.

- In November 2016, the scheme underwent further enhancement and was renamed as PMBJP to strengthen its impact.
- PMBJP, focuses on providing generic drugs through exclusive outlets known as Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
- These stores offer generic medicines at significantly lower prices compared to branded drugs, ensuring reduced out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare.
- Generic drugs provided by PMBJP stores are equivalent in quality and efficacy to expensive branded drugs, promoting the rational use of medications.
- **Benefits of Jan Aushadhi Kendras:**
  - Increased affordability of medicines: JAKs have significantly reduced healthcare costs for many people and reduced out-of-pocket expenditure.
  - Indian citizens have collectively saved over Rs. 28,000 crores over the last decade by purchasing medicines from Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
  - Improved access to medicines: JAKs have made essential medicines more readily available in underserved areas.
  - Around 10 to 12 lakh people visit JAKs daily.
  - Promotion of rational medicine use: JAKs provide information and counselling on the appropriate use of medicines, which can help to reduce misuse and overuse.
- **Expansion of Jan Aushadhi Kendras:**
  - PMBJP has expanded significantly in recent years, from only 80 Jan Aushadhi Kendras in 2014, to around 11,000 units operating across the country today.
  - The government aims to further increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras to 25,000 in the next two years.

*Source → The Hindu*

## **2 - Role of the Internet in Drug Trafficking:**

### **GS III**

#### **Internal Security**

- **Context:**
- Recently, the International Narcotics Control Board in its 2023 Annual Report, highlighted that online Drug Trafficking has increased the availability of drugs on the illicit market.

- **Drug Trafficking:**

- Drug trafficking refers to the illegal trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of illicit drugs.
- It encompasses a wide range of activities associated with the illegal drug trade, including the production of drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and synthetic drugs, as well as the transportation and distribution of these substances.
- Drug trafficking operates within a complex network of criminal organisations that span across borders, regions, and even continents.

- **What are the Key Highlights of the Annual Report by the International Narcotics Control Board?**

- **Regional Drug Supply Trends:**

- In Afghanistan, illicit opium poppy cultivation and heroin production declined dramatically.
- The opioid crisis continues to have serious consequences in North America with the number of deaths that involve synthetic opioids other than methadone continuing to increase, reaching more than 70,000 in 2021.
- Drug trafficking organisations continue to expand their operations in the Amazon Basin into illegal mining, illegal logging and wildlife trafficking.
- Record levels of illicit coca bush cultivation were recorded in Colombia and Peru, rising by 13% and 18% respectively.
- Seizures of cocaine reached a record level in 2021 in West and Central Africa, a significant transit region for cocaine.
- South Asia appears to be increasingly being targeted for the trafficking of methamphetamine illicitly manufactured in Afghanistan to Europe and Oceania.
- Pacific island States have transformed from solely transit sites along drug trafficking routes to destination markets for synthetic drugs.
- This is posing significant challenges to communities and their public health systems.

- **Challenges in Online Drug Trafficking:**

- There is an evolving landscape of online drug trafficking, presenting new challenges to drug control.
- The increased availability of illicit drugs on the Internet, exploitation by criminal groups of online platforms, and the risk of overdose deaths due to the online presence of synthetic opioids like fentanyl are significant challenges.

- **Exploitation of Online Platforms:**

- Criminals are exploiting legitimate e-commerce platforms, social media, and other online platforms for drug trafficking.

- Encryption methods, anonymous browsing on the darknet, and cryptocurrencies are used to avoid detection, making it difficult to prosecute online trafficking offences.
- France's law enforcement authorities collected more than 120 million text messages from 60,000 mobile phones.

- **Concerns about Patient Safety:**

- Patient safety is at risk from illicit Internet pharmacies that sell drugs without a prescription directly to consumers.
- It is impossible for consumers to know whether the drugs are counterfeit, unapproved or even illegal.
- The global trade in illicit pharmaceuticals is estimated to be worth 4.4 billion USD.

- **Recommendations:**

- Despite challenges, there are opportunities to use online platforms for drug use prevention, awareness campaigns, and improving access to drug treatment services.
- Governments can use social media platforms to conduct drug use prevention campaigns to prevent substance misuse among young people in particular.
- Telemedicine and Internet pharmacies could improve access to healthcare and help reach patients with drug use disorders and deliver drug treatment services to more people.
- Online platforms could also be used for sharing information about the adverse consequences of drug use and communicating warnings of adulterated drugs which could save lives.
- Placing certain amphetamine-type stimulant precursors and fentanyl precursors under international control to prevent illicit drug manufacturers from substituting controlled chemicals with closely related substitutes.
- Given the global nature of online platforms, collaborative efforts between governments, international organizations, regulatory authorities, and the private sector are essential to identify new threats and develop effective responses.
- INCB encourages voluntary cooperation to tackle the misuse of legitimate e-commerce platforms for drug trafficking.

- **International Narcotics Control Board:**

- The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is the independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions.
- It was established in 1968 in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.
- Its secretariat is located in Vienna, Austria.
- India's Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), cooperates with the INCB.
- Narcotics Control Bureau
- It was constituted by the Government of India in 1986 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- It is the apex coordinating agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- The National Policy on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances is based on Article 47 of the Indian Constitution which directs the State to endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- **What are the Initiatives Taken by India to Curb the Drug Menace?**
- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985: It prohibits a person from producing, possessing, selling, purchasing, transporting, storing, and/or consuming any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.
- The National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse was also created under a provision of the NDPS Act, 1985, to meet the expenditure incurred in the implementation of the Act.
- National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction: The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has prepared a plan for Drug Demand Reduction for 2018-25.
- This plan focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, identification, counselling, treatment, and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons, as well as training and capacity building of service providers through collaborative efforts of government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Nasha Mukh Bharat Campaign (NMBA): NMBA was launched in 2020 to tackle the issue of Substance Abuse and a vision to make India drug-free. It is a three-pronged attack combining:
  - Outreach and Awareness and Demand Reduction efforts by Social Justice and Empowerment
  - Treatment through the Health Department.
- **International Treaties and Conventions to Combat Drug Menace: India is a signatory of the following international treaties and conventions:**
  - United Nations (UN) Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)
  - UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)
  - UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971)
  - UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) 2000
- Addressing the issue of drug trafficking requires comprehensive strategies that encompass law enforcement efforts, international cooperation, border control measures, and robust demand reduction initiatives.
- By tackling both the supply and demand sides of the illicit drug trade, governments and communities can work together to mitigate its harmful effects and safeguard public health and safety.

**Source → The Hindu**

## 3 - NITI for States Platform:

### GS II

#### Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**

- Recently, the Union Minister of Electronics & Information Technology inaugurated the 'NITI for States' platform, a digital initiative aimed at empowering states and union territories (UTs) in their pursuit of national development goals.
- The 'Viksit Bharat Strategy Room' at NITI Aayog was also inaugurated.

- **What is NITI for States Platform?**

- Developed by NITI Aayog, “the NITI for States” platform serves as a repository of valuable resources, aiming to integrate data across states, centralising findings to inform future decisions by state governments based on data-driven insights.
- The platform incorporates real-time data updation and monitoring, spanning 10 sectors and two cross-cutting themes.
- Sectors include agriculture, education, energy, health, livelihoods and skilling, manufacturing, micro, small and medium enterprise, tourism, urban, water resources, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene).
- Cross-cutting themes encompass gender and climate change.

- **Features:**

- **Extensive Knowledge Base:** Curated best practices, policy documents, datasets, data profiles, and NITI Aayog publications.
- **Multilingual Accessibility:** Inclusive access in major Indian languages and foreign languages.
- **Capacity Building Initiatives:** Tailored digital training modules for officials at block, district, and state levels.
- **Expert Help Desk:** Specialised guidance through partnerships with leading institutions.
- **Data Integration:** Leverages data from the National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP) for comprehensive insights.
- **What is the Viksit Bharat Strategy Room?**
- The Viksit Bharat Strategy Room is an interactive space where users will be able to visualise data, trends, best practices and policies in an immersive environment and make a holistic assessment of any problem statement.

- It also allows users to interact through voice-enabled AI, and connect to multiple stakeholders through video conferencing.
- It is designed to become a plug-and-play model to enable replication at state, district and block levels.

*Source → The Hindu*

## 4 - PM-SURAJ and NAMASTE Scheme:

### GS II

#### Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**
- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan and Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan' (PM-SURAJ) national portal online aimed at offering credit support to the marginalized segments of society, with the Prime Minister as the Chief Guest.
- The PM distributed Ayushman Health Cards and Personal Protective Equipment to Safai Mitras (sewer and septic tank workers), under the National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) scheme, which was previously a rehabilitation scheme for manual scavengers.
- **What is PM-SURAJ?**
- The 'PM-SURAJ' national portal aims to uplift the most marginalized sections of society and provide credit assistance to one lakh entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities.
- It is implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and its departments.
- The portal serves as a one-stop point where people from disadvantaged sections of society can apply for and monitor the progress of all loan and credit schemes already available to them.
- The credit support will be facilitated through banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies Finance Institutions (NBFC-MFIs), and other organizations, ensuring accessibility across the country.
- An NBFC MFI is a non-deposit taking NBFC with a minimum Net Owned Funds (NOF) of Rs. 5 crore (Rs. 2 crore for those registered in the North Eastern Region of the country) and having at least 85% of its net assets as “qualifying assets (intended use or sale)”.



- **What is the NAMASTE Scheme?**

- The NAMASTE Scheme is a central Sector Scheme formulated in 2022, by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- It aims to ensure safety, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods for urban sanitation workers.
- The Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) has been renamed as the NAMASTE.
- The SRMS scheme was launched in 2007 to help rehabilitate manual scavengers and their dependents.
- The NAMASTE scheme is to be implemented over 4800 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of the country, during the next three years i.e. up to 2025-26.
- The National Safai Karamchari Financial Development Corporation (NSKFDC) is the implementing agency for NAMASTE.

- **Objectives:**

- Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (MS) and Persons Engaged in Hazardous Cleaning of Sewer and Septic tanks (SSWs).
- Promotion of safe and mechanised cleaning of sewers and septic tanks through trained and certified sanitation workers.

- **Intended Outcomes:**

- Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India.
- All sanitation work is performed by formalized skilled workers.
- No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter.
- Sanitation workers are collectivised into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises.
- Sewers and SSWs and their dependents also have access to livelihoods by providing capital subsidies for purchase of sanitation-related equipment.
- Increased awareness amongst sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered skilled & certified sanitation workers
- Extending Health Insurance Scheme benefits under Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) to SSW & manual scavengers and their family members.

**Source → The Hindu**