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Aadhar and its Voluntary Use

Recently the Parliament has passed the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which allows **voluntary use** of Aadhaar as proof of identity.

- The existing Aadhaar act provides for the use of Aadhaar number as proof of identity of a person, subject to authentication.
- The Bill **replaces** this provision to state that an individual may voluntarily use his Aadhaar number to establish his identity, by authentication or offline verification.
- The Bill states that authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar, for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory only by a law of Parliament.

Salient Features of the Bill

Also, under the Bill, the UIDAI may initiate a complaint against an entity in the Aadhaar ecosystem for failure to

- comply with the Act or the UIDAI's directions, and
- furnish information required by the UIDAI.
- Adjudicating Officers appointed by the UIDAI shall decide such matters and may impose penalties up to one crore rupees on such entities.
- The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal shall be the appellate authority against decisions of the Adjudicating Officer.

Unique Identification Authority of India

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is a statutory authority established on 12 July 2016 by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, following the provisions of the Aadhaar Act 2016.

- The UIDAI is mandated to assign a 12-digit unique identification (UID) number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.
- The UIDAI was initially set up by the Government of India in January 2009, as an attached office under the aegis of the Planning Commission

However, the opposition questioned the government's "intentions" on clearing the bill without first bringing in law for data protection. But the Government replied that :

- Data sovereignty is important to us and it will not be compromised. The legislation on data protection is a "work in progress" and the government would bring in a comprehensive law after further consultations with the stakeholders.
- India in future will become the centre of data refinery and the government is taking due precautions in constructing the data protection law because the world is looking at India to take the lead on the issue.

Global Study on Homicide

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) report "Global Study on Homicide" has revealed that people killed in **homicides** (act of one human killing another) across the world are **five times** higher than those killed in **armed conflicts**.

Although the number of homicides has increased (from 400,000 in 1992 to more than 460,000 in 2017), the actual global rate has declined (from 7.2 in 1992, to 6.1 in 2017) when measured against population growth.

Key Findings

- The largest share of homicide (37%) was registered in the **Americas** region, followed by **Africa** (35%).
 - In Africa, two countries **Nigeria** (terror group boko haram played a significant role) and **South Africa** saw almost half of the entire continent's homicides.
- Despite its large population, **Asia** accounted for **less than a quarter** of the total (23%), while **Europe** (4.7%) and **Oceania** (0.2%) accounted for by far the smallest shares.
- The safest locations are in **Asia, Europe and Oceania** (Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia), where murder rates (2.3, 3.0 and 2.8 respectively) are well below the **global average** of **6.1**.
- It has been found that for **19%** of homicides, were related to **organised crime** and gangs.
 - About 95% of victims killed in organised crimes are **men**.
 - The countries which have the highest rate of homicides due to organised crime include **Bahamas, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Jamaica** and **Panama**.

- Homicides linked to **intimate partner** account for **one quarter** of all homicides worldwide.
 - About **64%** of victims of killings by intimate partners are **women**.
- Globally, young men aged **15-29** years face the **highest risk** of homicide, while men aged **30-44** years face the **second-highest risk**.
 - The homicide risk **decreases** for men aged 45–59 years and **60+** years and is **lowest for boys** under 15 years of age.
 - **Women** face a much **lower homicide** risk across all age groups.
- **Environment** (particularly conflict over resources and changes associated with increasing temperatures) has played an important role in **increased homicides**.

India Specific Findings

- In India, the overall homicide rate **decreased** by **10%** over the period 2009 -2015.
 - At the same time, the spatial (geographical) variation in the homicide rate shifted noticeably, with some states in the **north** registering an **increase** in the homicide rate, while some large states in the **south** (e.g. Andhra Pradesh) experienced a **decrease**.
 - There is also a **slight increase** in '**intimate partner**' violence in India.
 - Firearms have a limited impact on overall suicide levels as compared to countries like Colombia and Mexico, countries with high homicides rates and organized crimes.
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A New Way of Predicting Monsoon

- A researcher at a science and technology conference organised in Vienna by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation has come up with a new way of predicting the monsoon,
- The method measures how much Beryllium-7, an isotope of the element Beryllium, is present in the air.
- Be-7 is chosen because it is created only in the stratosphere when cosmic rays hit and break the nuclei of nitrogen and oxygen.
- During monsoons the air flows down from the stratosphere (upwards of 33,000 feet from the earth's surface), bringing some Be-7. Thereby making the prediction of monsoon more reliable.
- Research proposes that there is a strong connection between the amount of Be-7 and the timing of monsoons, which is yet to be proven.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) is an international organization, established upon the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996.

- Its headquarter is in Vienna, Austria.
 - The organization is tasked with verifying the ban on nuclear tests and therefore operates a worldwide monitoring system and may conduct on-site inspections.
 - The CTBTO runs the International Monitoring System (IMS) of 300-odd stations, which can sense vibrations, hear sounds or smell noble gases (such as Xenon, Krypton) 'radionuclides' (such as Beryllium-7).
 - IMS can detect any nuclear explosion globally.
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National Youth Corp Scheme

National Youth Corps (NYC) is a scheme of the Department of Youth Affairs, **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** implemented through **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)**.

- National Youth Corps scheme was launched under the umbrella scheme **Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme** to tap the potential of the youth and channeling their energy towards nation-building.
- It is an amalgamation of the existing two volunteer schemes namely **National Service Volunteer (NSV) and Rashtriya Sadbhawana Yojana (RSY)**.

Objectives

- To set up a group of disciplined and dedicated youth who have the inclination and spirit to engage in the task of **nation-building**.
- To facilitate the realization of **inclusive growth** (both social and economic).
- To act as points for the dissemination of **information, basic knowledge** in the community.
- To act as group modulators and **peer group educator**.
- To act as **role models** for the younger cohort especially towards enhancement of public ethics, probity and dignity of labour.

Features

- The NYC Scheme enables young men and women in the age group of **18-29 years** to serve up to **two years** on a full time basis for which they receive an honorarium of Rs **5000/-per month**.
- The selection of NYC volunteers is done by a **selection committee**, headed by **District Collector/Deputy Commissioner** of the concerned District.
- The scheme guidelines also stipulate that the NYC volunteers shall have **no claim or right** for any **regular employment** to any post under the deploying agency/department.
- The scheme is fully funded by the **Government of India**.

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan

- Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan(NYKS) was set up in the year 1987-88 as an **autonomous organization** ,under the Government of India, **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
 - NYKS is the **largest grassroots level** youth organization; one of its kind in the world.
 - NYKS has targeted to identify areas of harnessing youth power for development by forming **Youth Clubs**, which are village level voluntary action groups of youth at the grassroots level to involve them in nation building activities.
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Genetic Disorders

The government is setting up **specialist laboratories** in the country to conduct **tests for genetic diseases**, which is a leading cause of death among infants and children in the poorest districts across the country.

- There are **117 aspirational districts** that lack such diagnostic facilities.
- The laboratories will run under the **Human Genetics and Genome Analysis Programme** under the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology.

The programme addresses issues related to specific inherited diseases concerning the Indian population.

Genetic Disorders in India

- Common **genetic disorders in India** are Beta-Thalassemia, Cystic Fibrosis, Sickle Cell Anaemia, Spinal Muscular Atrophy and Haemophilia.
 - **Beta thalassemia** is a blood disorder that reduces the production of hemoglobin.
 - **Cystic fibrosis** is a disorder that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs in the body.
 - **Sickle cell anemia**, or sickle cell disease (SCD), is a genetic disease of the red blood cells (RBCs).
 - **Spinal muscular atrophy** is a disorder characterized by weakness and wasting in muscles used for movement (skeletal muscles).
- According to the Health ministry, at least **80% of rare diseases** have an identified **genetic origin** and disproportionately impact children.
 - Half of all new cases are in children** and are responsible for 35% of deaths before the age of 1 year, 10% between the ages of 1 and 5 years, and 12% between 5 and 15 years.
- According to the government estimates, **the genetic** and congenital disorder is the

second most common cause of infant and **childhood mortality**, and occurs with a prevalence of 25-60 per 1,000 births.

Need For Laboratories

- There is a consequent mushrooming of private labs in the country not following international standards.
 - Genetic testing has enabled researchers and clinicians to detect inherited traits, diagnose heritable conditions, determine, and quantify the likelihood that a heritable disease will develop, and identify genetic susceptibility to familial disorders.
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FIDIC ASPAC Conference 2019

The **FIDIC ASPAC 2019 International Conference for Engineering Services** is taking place in New Delhi, **India** from 7th to 9th July 2019. It has been **organized by** the Consulting Engineers Association of India (**CEAI**).

- The theme of the Conference is **“Quality Infrastructure for Clean and Sustainable Development”**.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Infrastructure industry revolution
 - Urban Mobility
 - Coastal & Marine Development
 - Energy and Quality of Life
 - Business Opportunities with Regional Cooperation
 - Young Professionals Open Forum
 - Technological Developments

International Federation of Consulting Engineers

- Founded in **1913**, FIDIC is the global representative body for **national associations of consulting engineers** and presently, represents over one million engineering professionals and 40,000 firms in more than 100 countries worldwide.
- It promotes and implements the consulting engineering industry’s strategic goals on behalf of its Member Associations and disseminates information and resources of interest to its members.

ASPAC

- ASPAC represents the consulting engineering industry in Asia and Pacific Region as the **regional grouping of FIDIC Member Associations**.
- ASPAC has 22 member countries.

- The main objective is to encourage regional cooperation amongst the member associations by sharing and enhancing knowledge on the different infrastructure requirements of each country.

The Consulting Engineers Association of India

- It is an **apex body of consulting engineers** with a pan-India membership, comprising of professional consulting engineering organisations and eminent engineering consultants.
- It promotes professional interest as well as establish rights and privileges of the consulting engineering profession in India.
- It is the **Indian Member Association of FIDIC**.
- It is a non-profit organisation, registered under the Societies Act.

Related Proposals in the Union Budget 2019-20

- The **budget has provided** for a road map for the **expansion of infrastructure** in the country with investment of **one lakh crore rupees** in the next five years.
- An investment of **Rs 50 lakh crore** is proposed for the expansion and **development of railways** in next 10-12 years.
- **Incentives for electric vehicles industry** has been proposed in the budget.
 - Also, India has achieved **1200% growth** in installed capacity of **solar energy** during the last five years.
 - India has also become the **largest user of LED bulbs** with the improvement of technology and cost cutting of manufacturing.
 - The number of households that have access to **LPG through cylinders** have almost doubled.

Note: A **national gas grid** for delivery of piped gas to all households in urban centres is also being planned by the government.

SEBI gets New Powers

The Finance Bill, 2019 has given the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** new powers to act against entities that tamper or destroy electronic databases or fail to furnish information.

- A new **section (15HAA)** has been inserted in the SEBI Act, which states that if a person tampers with information to obstruct or influence an investigation, destroys regulatory data or tries to access data in an unauthorised manner then the entity could be penalised up to ₹10 crore or three times the unlawful gains, whichever is higher.

Though it is not yet clear whether 'regulatory data' and 'database' as mentioned in the section refers only to SEBI data or even those maintained by exchanges, depositories and clearing corporations.

- SEBI can now also impose penalties of up to ₹1 crore on brokers if they fail to issue a contract note to clients in the format as laid down by the exchanges.

Earlier, only the lower limit of ₹1 lakh was prescribed.

- These new powers assume significance as it is already probing the leak of sensitive data through WhatsApp and also recently passed fresh orders on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) co-location matter.
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Utkarsh 2022

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has finalised a three- year roadmap, named Utkarsh 2022 to improve regulation and supervision, among other functions of the central bank.

- Utkarsh 2022 is a medium term strategy in line with the global central banks' plan to strengthen the regulatory and supervisory mechanism.

This specifically includes central bank's proactive role to avoid any other IL&FS debt default issue in future.

- Earlier, an internal committee of RBI was formed under former Deputy Governor Viral Acharya, to identify issues that needed to be addressed over the next three years.
 - The RBI board also approved the RBI's budget for the July 2019—June 2020 period.
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International Indigenous Film Festival

International Indigenous Film Festival of **Kuching, Malaysia** is showcasing films on **indigenous Indian communities**.

- Four Indian films showcased at International Indigenous film festival (held in Kuching, Malaysia) are:
 - **Dibi Durga** by Niranjan Kujur.
 - **Niyamgiri-The Mountain of Law** by Surya Shankar Dash (Odisha).
 - **Shot Awake** by Anungla Zoe (Nagaland).
 - **Strength in Diversity** by Chentei (Nagaland).
- Festival showcases films made by **indigenous filmmakers** in collaboration with the indigenous communities with the intent to shed a light on and celebrate the huge and diverse native tribes and indigenous cultures, their issues and concerns and the problems afflicting them.
- The festival aims to be a platform for **indigenous communities** from the world over to share, have a dialogue, collaborate and to use cinema as a mode of united

assertion, resistance, and activism against exploitative forces.

- **India's first** international indigenous film festival was held in **Bhubneswar, Odisha** in february 2019.
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