



Atal Bihari Vajpayee Passes Away

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Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a towering politician, statesman, orator and a poet passed away at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi.

- He was Prime Minister thrice in 1996, 1998-1999 and 1999-2004.
- Born on December 25, 1924, in Gwalior, Mr. Vajpayee was elected 10 times to the Lok Sabha from four different States and was twice member of the Rajya Sabha.
- He was awarded **India's highest civilian honor Bharat Ratna in 2015** on his birthday. His birthday, December 25, is observed as the Good Governance Day by the government.
- He was also awarded **Padma Vibhushan** in 1992.

Few Flagship Initiatives

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

- Launched in 2000-2001 to provide **free and compulsory education** to children between **6 to 14 years**.
- As per 2013 data, the school dropout has declined from 80 lakh in 2009 to 30 lakh in 2012 due to the success of the SSA.
- The **net enrolment ratio at the primary level has also increased to 99.8 per cent** since the launch of the scheme.
- Recently the Government has approved an **Integrated Scheme on School Education** by subsuming the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (**SSA**), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (**RMSA**) and Teacher Education (**TE**) from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2020.
- In January, 2017 the government launched a dedicated web portal **ShaGun** for monitoring the progress of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The portal was developed by **World Bank** in collaboration with Union Ministry of Human Resource Development. Its name has been derived from the words Shala (means schools) and Gun (i.e. Gunvatta meaning Quality).

2. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) conventions are being held every year **since 2003**.
- It is celebrated on 9 January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on **this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, returned to India from South Africa**.
- These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and people of the land of their ancestors for mutually beneficial activities.
- These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.
- The **15th PBD will be held in Varanasi (U.P.)** in January, 2019 and its theme will be **"Role of Indian Diaspora in Building a New India"**.

3. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

- The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was launched on 25th December, 2000 to **provide all-weather access to unconnected habitations**.
- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** and 50% of the Cess on High Speed Diesel (HSD) is earmarked for this Programme.
- Recently, the Government has brought **forward the target date by three years from 2022 to 2019** to achieve complete rural connectivity through all-weather roads under PMGSY.
- The unit for this Programme is a **Habitation and not a Revenue village or a Panchayat**. A Habitation is a cluster of population, living in an area, the location of which **does not change over time**.