



PM Unveils Development Projects in Rajasthan | Rajasthan | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled and laid the foundation stone of **multiple development projects worth** over Rs 17,000 crore via video conferencing in Rajasthan.

Key Points

- The announcement came as a part of the '**Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan**' programme and encompassed crucial sectors, including **roads, railways, solar energy, power transmission, drinking water, and petroleum & natural gas.**
- The PM emphasized the significance of the development projects and stressed the importance of **rapid development in essential sectors** such as rail, road, electricity, and water for the progress of Rajasthan.
- He highlighted the substantial **allocation of Rs 11 trillion** in [2024 Union Budget](#) for infrastructure development.
- **Infrastructure in Rajasthan:**
 - For **highway infrastructure** development, various national highway projects worth over Rs 5,000 crore were inaugurated.
 - This will improve connectivity in Kota, Udaipur, Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, Boondi, Ajmer, Bhilwara and Chittorgarh.
 - These roads will also ensure better connectivity with Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
 - For **railways**, PM laid the foundation stone for eight projects worth approximately Rs 2,300 crore.
 - He dedicated the **power transmission sector** projects worth more than Rs 2,100 crore, in Rajasthan, to the nation.
 - He also outlined the **PM Surya Ghar Yojna's** aim to provide free electricity and facilitate solar panel installations in households, particularly benefiting the middle and lower-middle-class segments.
 - The PM also laid the foundation stone for multiple projects under the [Jal Jeevan Mission \(JJM\)](#), worth around Rs 2,400 crore.

PM Surya Ghar Yojna

- It is a pioneering government initiative aimed at **installing rooftop solar power systems in one crore households** across the nation.
- Rooftop solar panels are **photovoltaic panels** installed on the roof of a building that is connected to the main power supply unit.
- It reduces the consumption of **grid-connected electricity** and saves electricity costs for the consumer.
 - Surplus solar power units generated from the rooftop solar plant can be exported to the grid as per the metering provisions.
 - The consumer can receive monetary benefits for the surplus exported power as per the prevailing regulations

Chevening Scholarship | Uttarakhand | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

Uttarakhand government has announced its initiative to **support ten outstanding students from the state** in pursuing a **one-year Master's programme in the United Kingdom (UK)** through the prestigious **Chevening scholarship**. The state will cover 50% of the expenses, while Chevening India will fund the remaining expenses.

Key Points

- The scholarship covers various expenses including academic fees, travel, accommodation, and visa charges, providing a holistic support system for the beneficiaries.
- **Graduates with two years of work experience** will qualify for the scholarship, enabling them to pursue higher education or research at any British university. Initially, five women and five men will be chosen for the programme.
- A **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** will be signed between the government and Chevening India. This partnership **marks the first of its kind for Uttarakhand**.
 - It was **done earlier in Jharkhand** as well.

The Chevening Scholarship

- It is an international scholarship, **funded by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office**, that lets foreign students with leadership qualities study at universities in the UK.
- The stated objective of the scheme is to build a network of friends of the UK, who will be future leaders in their countries.

PM to Lay Foundation of Kalki Dham Temple | Uttar Pradesh | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

The Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone of the **Shri Kalki Dham Temple** in **Sambhal district**.

Key Points

- The temple is being constructed by the **Shri Kalki Dham Nirman Trust**.
- The inauguration programme will be **attended by many saints, religious leaders and other dignitaries**.
- The Prime Minister will also launch 14,000 projects across UP worth more than Rs 10-lakh crore at the **fourth Groundbreaking ceremony** for investment proposals received during the **[Uttar Pradesh Global Investors Summit 2023 \(UPGIS 2023\)](#)**.
 - The projects relate to sectors like manufacturing, **renewable energy**, Information Technology and IT-enabled services, food processing, housing and real estate, hospitality

and entertainment, education, among others.

Western Disturbances to Bring Rain to Uttar Pradesh | Uttar Pradesh | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

According to the [India Meteorological Department](#), Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and parts of Uttar Pradesh are expected to receive light to moderate rain, thunderstorms, and hailstorms in the coming days with an intense spell of **snowfall in the western Himalayan region**.

Key Points

- A fresh active **Western Disturbance** is projected to affect northwest India. The weather system is expected to have widespread impacts, with **diverse weather conditions** observed across multiple regions.
- The Western Disturbance is expected to cause significant changes in usual weather patterns, and communities are advised to stay prepared for these changes.
 - Authorities have been urged to gear up for any necessary measures to ensure public safety.

Western Disturbances

- These are a series of **cyclonic storms that originate in the Mediterranean region, travel over 9,000 km to bring winter rains to northwest India**.
 - A Western Disturbance **collects moisture from the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and Caspian Sea** and traverses over **Iran and Afghanistan** before hitting the **western Himalayas**.
- While the storm systems occur throughout the year, they travel to India mostly between **December and April because the trajectory of the subtropical westerly jet stream**, which transports them, shifts during the winter months to the rim of the Himalayas.
 - For the rest of the year, the jet stream travels from above the **Himalayas to the Tibetan Plateau and China**. Its trajectory changes as per the position of the Sun.
- **Significance for India:**
 - Western Disturbances are the **primary source of snowfall that replenishes the Himalayan glaciers** during winter.
 - These glaciers **feed major Himalayan rivers like the Ganga, Indus and Yamuna** as well as myriad mountain springs and rivulets.
 - These low-pressure storm systems **help farmers in India grow their rabi crop**.
- **Issues:**
 - The Western Disturbances are **not always the harbingers of good weather**. Sometimes WDs can cause **extreme weather events like floods, flash floods, landslides, dust storms, hail storms** and cold waves, destroying infrastructure and impacting life and livelihoods.

India Meteorological Department

- IMD was **established in 1875**. It is the National Meteorological Service of the country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.
 - It works as an **agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India**.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi**.

- IMD is also **one of the six Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres** of the World Meteorological Organization.

Ayush Regional Review Meeting | Bihar | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

Union Minister of Ayush and Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, stressed the importance of holistic healthcare on a global scale during **Regional Review Meeting** of six states: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, which was arranged by the **Ministry of Ayush** in Patna, Bihar.

Key Points

- The Ministry of Ayush is actively supporting state and union territory governments in implementing various initiatives outlined in their **State Annual Action Plans (SAAPs)** under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the **National Ayush Mission (NAM)**.
 - With the vision of providing Ayush healthcare services across the country, the **NAM aims to strengthen and enhance Ayush healthcare facilities**, empowering the public with informed choices.
- The Ministry of Ayush has **allocated Rs 1712.54 Crores to seven states**—Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal—under the NAM.
 - It also supported the establishment of **58 Integrated Ayush hospitals**, with 14 already operational.
 - Out of the planned 12,500 Ayush Health and Wellness Centres (AHWCs), 4235 have been supported, with 3439 already functional in these states.
- The states were **urged to accelerate the construction of Ayush Educational Institutes** and integrated Ayush hospitals.
- The importance of implementing Ayush public health programs outlined in the NAM guidelines, focusing on various interventions for a holistic approach to health was highlighted.
- States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh were specifically encouraged to undertake the National Program on Ayush for **Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP) of Lymphatic Filariasis**.

National Ayush Mission (NAM)

- It was **launched in September 2014** by the **Department of AYUSH** under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, during the 12th Plan for implementation through States/UTs.
 - Now, it is implemented by the **Ministry of Ayush**.
- The scheme involves **expansion of the AYUSH sector** to promote holistic health of Indians.
- The Mission addresses the gaps in health services through **supporting the efforts of State/UT Governments for providing AYUSH health services/education in the country**, particularly in vulnerable and far-flung areas.

Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)

- LF, commonly known as **elephantiasis** and is considered as a **Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)**. It is the second most disabling disease after mental health.
- It **impairs the lymphatic system** and can lead to the **abnormal enlargement of body parts**, causing pain, severe disability and social stigma.

- The lymphatic system is a network of vessels and specialized tissues that are essential to maintaining the overall fluid balance and health of organs and limbs and, importantly, are a major component of the body's immune defense system.
- Lymphatic filariasis is a **vector-borne disease**, caused by infection with parasites **classified as nematodes (roundworms)** of the family Filarioidea. There are **3 types** of thread-like filarial worms which causes lymphatic filariasis:
 - **Wuchereria Bancrofti** is responsible for 90% of the cases.
 - **Brugia Malayi** causes most of the remainder of the cases.
 - **Brugia Timori** also causes the disease.
- **Drug Treatment:**
 - The **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommends **three drug treatments** to accelerate the **global elimination of lymphatic filariasis**.
 - The treatment, **known as IDA**, involves a combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole.
 - The plan is to administer these drugs for two consecutive years. The life of the adult worm is hardly four years, so it would die a natural death without causing any harm to the person.
- **Scenario in India:**
 - Lymphatic filariasis poses a grave threat to India. An **estimated 650 million Indians across 21 states and union territories are at risk** of lymphatic filariasis.
 - **Over 40% of worldwide cases** are found in India.
 - The government launched the **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF) in 2018**, and as part of intensifying efforts towards elimination, **later rolled out IDA treatment (triple drug therapy)** in a phased manner.

Caste Census in Jharkhand | Jharkhand | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

Jharkhand will soon see a [Caste Census](#) in the state on the lines of neighbouring Bihar.

Key Points

- The CM has directed the personnel department to prepare a draft (SoP for conducting the survey) and place it before the cabinet for approval.
- The caste-based survey will be conducted in Jharkhand based on data collected between 7th January and 2nd October 2023.

Census

- The origin of the Census in India goes back to the colonial exercise of **1881**.
 - Census has evolved and been used by the government, policymakers, academics, and others to capture the Indian population, access resources, map social change, **delimitation exercise**, etc.
- **First Caste Census as SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census):**
 - **SECC** was conducted for the **first time in 1931**.
 - **SECC** is meant to canvass every Indian family, both in rural and urban India, and ask about their:
 - **Economic status**, so as to allow Central and State authorities to come up with a range of indicators of deprivation, permutations, and combinations of which could

be used by each authority to define a poor or deprived person.

- It is also meant to ask every person their **specific caste name** to allow the government to **re-evaluate which caste groups** were economically worse off and which were better off.

▪ **Difference Between Census & SECC:**

- The Census provides a **portrait of the Indian population**, while the SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support.
- Since the **Census falls under the Census Act of 1948**, all data are considered confidential, whereas according to the SECC website, “all the personal information given in the SECC is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to households.”

Pact to Share Yamuna Water | Haryana | 19 Feb 2024

Why in News?

Haryana signed an agreement with Rajasthan to share water from [Sutlej Yamuna Link \(SYL\)](#) canal, with it excess water flowing from its [Hathnikund barrage](#), especially during the rainy days.

Key Points

- According to the agreement, the two states will prepare a detailed project report for **laying pipelines from Western Yamuna Canal of Hathnikund barrage**.
- Three pipes would be meant for **Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts**, while an additional pipe will be laid to take water towards southern Haryana through **Dadri district**.

Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal

- The Issue stems from a controversial **1981 water-sharing agreement drawn up when Haryana was carved out of Punjab in 1966**.
- **Punjab:**
 - Punjab vehemently **opposes sharing any additional water** with neighboring states. They stress that Punjab lacks surplus water and highlights the reduction in their water allocation over the years.
 - Many areas in Punjab may **go dry after 2029** and the state has already **over-exploited its groundwater** for irrigation purposes as it fills granaries of the Centre by growing wheat and paddy worth Rs 70,000 crore every year.
 - Water in about **79% of the state's area is over-exploited** and in such a situation, the government says sharing water with any other state is impossible.
- **Haryana:**
 - Haryana strongly advocates for the canal's completion, **citing a looming water crisis and asserting that Punjab** has been utilizing Haryana's share of water.
 - It says that providing irrigation is tough for the state and there was a problem of drinking water in **southern parts of Haryana**, where groundwater has depleted up to 1,700 feet.
 - Haryana has been **citing its contribution to the central food pool** and arguing that it is being **denied its rightful share in the water as assessed by a tribunal**.

