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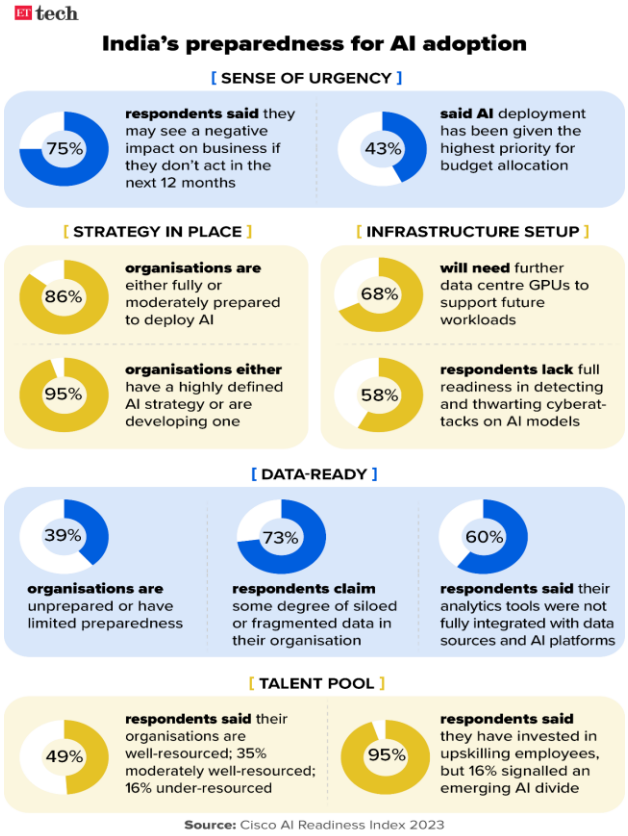
Current affairs summary for prelims

9 March, 2024

India AI Mission

Context: *On Thursday, the Union Cabinet approved the India AI Mission, allotting Rs 10,372 crore for the next five years. This initiative involves the allocation of funds by the government to subsidize private companies.*

- **India AI Mission's Objectives:**
  - The primary objective of the India AI Mission is to establish a computing capacity of over 10,000 GPUs.
  - Additionally, the mission aims to develop foundational models with a capacity of over 100 billion parameters.
  - It also seeks to train models on datasets covering major Indian languages for priority sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and governance.
  - The mission includes plans to develop AI Curation Units (ACUs) in 50-line ministries.
  - Furthermore, it aims to establish an AI marketplace offering AI as a service and pre-trained models.
- **Implementation Strategy:**
  - To achieve these objectives, the mission will be implemented through a public-private partnership model with 50% viability gap funding.
  - A tender will be issued inviting companies to set up data centers, with a priority on selecting advanced GPUs.
  - Private entities will have the flexibility to add more capacity if prices decrease, ensuring scalability.
  - A substantial amount of Rs 4,564 crore has been allocated for computing infrastructure to support this implementation strategy.
- **Support for Deep Tech Startups:**
  - The government will provide financial support to deep tech startups, with approximately Rs 2,000 crore earmarked for this purpose.
  - Additionally, the establishment of the IndiaAI Innovation Research Centre, with a focus on large foundational models, will receive Rs 2,000 crore in funding.
- **AI Datasets Platform:** As part of the mission, an AI Datasets Platform will be set up to leverage high-quality non-personal datasets and host identified "high-quality" AI-ready datasets.
- **Comparison with Other Regions:**
  - The India AI Mission follows the clearance of chip projects worth Rs 1.26 lakh crore, including the country's first commercial fabrication plant.
  - This strategy aligns with initiatives in other regions, such as the European Union's efforts to enable access to hardware for building large-scale AI models.



'Measles and Rubella Champion' Award

Context: *India has been honoured with the Measles and Rubella Champion Award by The Measles and Rubella Partnership at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington D.C.*

- **The Measles and Rubella Partnership:**
  - Comprises a multi-agency planning committee, including the American Red Cross, BMGF, GAVI, US CDC, UNF, UNICEF, and WHO.
  - Dedicated to reducing global measles deaths and preventing rubella illness.
  - Recognition of India's Commitment:
  - Celebrates India's unwavering commitment to public health and outstanding leadership in curbing the spread of measles and rubella among children.
  - Acknowledges India for providing regional leadership to the measles & rubella elimination programme by utilizing 'measles as a tracer' to strengthen routine immunization under the country's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP).
- **Progress and Achievements:**
  - Despite challenges, India has demonstrated remarkable progress in reducing measles and rubella cases and preventing outbreaks through comprehensive interventions.

Face to Face Centres
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- Government's proactive MR vaccination campaign in high-risk areas, innovative strategies to reach underserved populations, robust surveillance systems, and effective public-awareness initiatives have played a crucial role.

➢ **Impact and Recognition:**

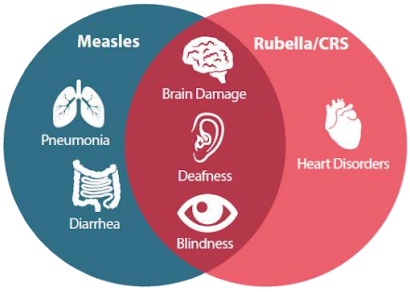
- Award is a testament to the dedication and hard work of frontline health workers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and communities across the nation.
- Efforts have led to 50 districts consistently not witnessing any measles case, while 226 districts have not reported rubella cases over the past 12 months.

➢ **Measles:**

- Measles is a highly contagious viral disease that poses a significant risk of mortality among young children worldwide.
- The disease is caused by a single-stranded, enveloped RNA virus belonging to the genus Morbillivirus in the Paramyxoviridae family.
- It disproportionately affects children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those who are malnourished or have compromised immune systems.
- Measles can lead to severe complications, including blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhea, ear infections, and pneumonia.

➢ **Rubella:**

- Also known as German Measles, rubella is a contagious viral infection typically characterized by mild symptoms, commonly affecting children and young adults.
- The rubella virus, an enveloped single-stranded RNA virus, is responsible for causing this infection.
- In pregnant women, rubella infection can result in severe outcomes such as death or the development of Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS), leading to irreversible birth defects.
- While rubella shares some signs and symptoms with measles, such as the presence of a red rash, it is caused by a different virus and is generally less infectious and severe compared to measles



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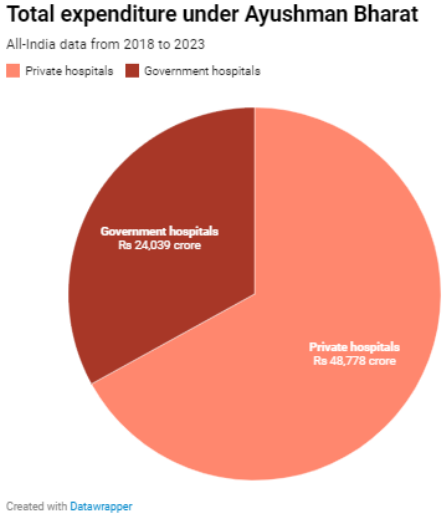
Scenario of Ayushman Bharat Beneficiaries

Context: *Since its inception in 2018, two-thirds of the yearly expenditure of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) has flowed to private hospitals.*

➢ **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) Overview:**

- Launched in 2018, AB-PMJAY aims to achieve universal health coverage and reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenses for the poor.
- The scheme is jointly funded by the Centre and states in a ratio of 60:40 (90:10 in North-East and hilly states).
- Government hospitals constitute 58% of all empanelled facilities under the scheme.



➢ **Utilization of AB-PMJAY:**

- Over six years, 2.95 crore patients (54% of beneficiaries till December 2023) accessed the scheme.
- Private healthcare facilities received 67% of the total expenditure under the scheme since 2018.

➢ **Regional Utilization:**

- Southern states, with only 17% of Ayushman cards, accounted for 53% of total patients.
- Five states, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, had 60% of total beneficiaries despite political differences.

➢ **Scheme Details:**

- AB-PMJAY offers up to Rs 5 lakh annually per family for hospitalizations in 27,000 empanelled secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities.
- It covers nearly 2,000 procedures and provides critical illness coverage, including cancer and heart diseases.

➢ **Beneficiary Selection:**

- Families are identified based on the 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census, with 13.44 crore families (65 crore people) being potential beneficiaries.
- Approximately 32.40 crore people have been issued Ayushman Bharat cards.

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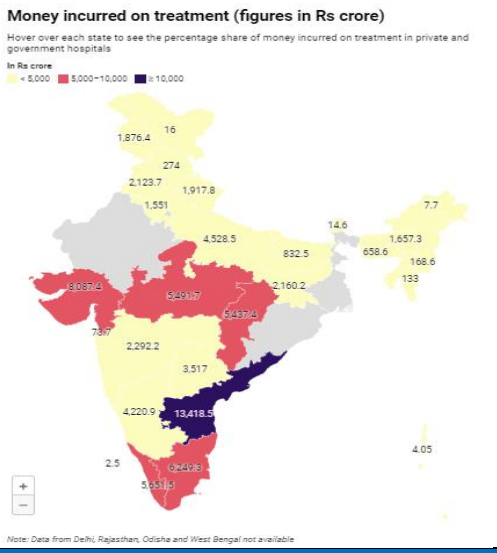

- **Trends and Expenditure:**
  - Private facilities saw a bulk of the 5.47 crore patients over five years.
  - Rs 48,778.61 crore (66% of total expenditure) was spent on treatments at private facilities.
  - Five states accounted for 59% of this expenditure: Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Post-Covid Trends:**
  - Shift towards government facilities among patients, but spending remains higher in private facilities.
  - In 2022-23 and 2023-24, more patients opted for government facilities, but expenditure was higher in private facilities.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Gramdan

The Maharashtra government recently notified Mendha, a village in Gadchiroli district, as a separate Gram Panchayat under The Maharashtra Gramdan Act, 1964.

About the Gramdan:

- Gramdan is an extension of the **Bhoodan Movement initiated by Gandhian Vinoba Bhave in 1951,** aiming for land redistribution to the landless.
- It empowers communities towards **self-governance** and **equal rights over natural resources**, promoting a collective approach in society.
- Under **Gramdan, entire villages put their land under a common trust**, preventing its sale outside the community.
- At least **75% of landowners** in a village must surrender land ownership to the community for Gramdan status, covering at least **60% of the village land**.
- Seven states in India, including Maharashtra, have a total of 3,660 Gramdan villages, with the **highest number in Odisha (1309).**
- In **September 2022, Assam repealed its Gramdan Acts** to counter land encroachment issues.
- Mendha is known for securing community forest rights (CFR) and is the first village in India to achieve this following the **Forest Rights Act, 2006.**

Liquid Funds

Recently, Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) data showed a significant surge in inflows to liquid funds, increasing by 69% from January to ₹83,642.33 crore in February.

About Liquid Funds:

- Liquid funds are a **type of mutual fund** that invests in **short-term market instruments** such as treasury bills, commercial papers and term deposits with a maturity **period of up to 91 days.**
- The primary objective of liquid funds is to provide investors with a safe and liquid investment option with minimal risk and stable returns in the short term.
- Liquid funds are characterized **by high liquidity, low risk stemming from short-term investments in highly-rated debt instruments** and a stable Net Asset Value (NAV) of **₹1 per unit**, providing investors with capital preservation assurance.
- Liquid funds are regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) under the Mutual Funds Regulations.
- **SEBI imposes guidelines** regarding investment objectives, portfolio composition, and risk management to safeguard investor interests.

The Great Barrier Reef

Recently, Australian authorities confirmed a widespread coral bleaching event in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), observed through aerial surveys conducted by the Reef Authority and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), indicating potential coral mortality.

About the Great Barrier Reef:

- The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is **located off the coast of Queensland, Australia** and is the **world's largest coral reef system**.
- It extends **over 2,000 km in a northwest-southeast** direction, with an offshore distance ranging from 16 to 160 km, and a width ranging from 60 to 250 km.
- It is renowned for its rich marine biodiversity, home to thousands of species of fish, coral, and other marine life, including endangered species like the dugong and green sea turtle.
- It is **designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981** due to its outstanding universal value as one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet.

	▪ It has experienced multiple coral bleaching events in recent years due to rising sea temperatures caused by climate change. ▪ Coral **bleaching occurs when corals expel symbiotic algae**, leading to coral death if prolonged or severe.
Personality in News **Sudha Murty** 	*Sudha Murty was nominated to the Rajya Sabha on March 8, 2024 (On International Women's Day) by the President of India (Droupadi Murmu).* **Sudha Murty:** ▪ Sudha Murty, born on August 19, 1950, in **Shiggaon, Haveri district in North Karnataka**, is an Indian educator, author and philanthropist and former chairperson of the Infosys Foundation. **Contributions:** ▪ Sudha Murty, the **wife of Infosys co-founder N.R. Narayana Murthy**, holds the distinction of being the **first woman engineer at Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO).** ▪ Her notable works include "**How I Taught My Grandmother to Read," "Wise and Otherwise" and "Dollar Bahu**." **Awards and Honours:** ▪ She is the recipient of the **Padma Shri in 2006** and **Padma Bhushan in 2023**. ▪ She was awarded by the **R.K. Narayana's Award** for Literature in 2006. ▪ She has been honoured with the **Raja-Lakshmi Award and Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya Puraskar** for her literary contributions. **Ethical Values: Generosity, Humility, Compassion, Empathy, etc.**
Place in News **Mexico**	*Recently, protesters in Mexico broke down a door to the presidential palace during a demonstration demanding justice for 43 students who disappeared nearly a decade ago.* **Mexico (Capital: Mexico City)** **Location:** Mexico, officially known as the United Mexican States is a country in the southern portion of **North America**. **Boundaries:** Mexico shares its land borders with the **United States** (North), **Guatemala** and **Belize** (Southeast) and **maritime** borders with the **Pacific Ocean** (West), the **Caribbean Sea** (Southeast) and the **Gulf of Mexico** (East). **Physical Features:** ▪ The highest point in Mexico is the peak of **Pico de Orizaba**, also known as Citlaltepetl. ▪ Mexico's major rivers include the **Rio Grande, Usumacinta, Grijalva, Papaloapan, Balsas** and **Yaqui.** ▪ The country has several deserts, with the most notable ones being the **Sonoran Desert, Chihuahuan Desert** and **the Mexican portion of the Mojave Desert**. **Political Structure:** ▪ Mexico is a **federal presidential republic** with a multi-party system. The **President serves as both the head of state and head of government**, elected for a single six-year term.

POINTS TO PONDER

- On March 6th, at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington, which award did India receive for its exemplary efforts in combating measles and rubella? **– Measles and Rubella Champion Award (The award was received by the ambassador Sripriya Ranganathan on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare)**
- In a study comparing 92 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), what is India's rank in terms of the prevalence of children aged 6-23 months who have not consumed any food over a 24-hour period? **– Third highest**
- Which ship of the United States Coast Guard reached Port Blair ahead of the 'Sea Defenders-2024' joint exercise? **– Bertholf**
- Which departments have collaborated to undertake a pilot project on the School Soil Health Programme? **– Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**
- Who recently introduced Haiper, an AI-powered video generation tool? **– Former members of Google's DeepMind team**