



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 06-09-2024

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Smart City mission

Syllabus: GS-1; Urbanization

Context

- *The Smart Cities Mission (SCM), which was launched to enhance the quality of life in urban spaces, has completed more than 90% of the total projects.*
- *The remaining 10% of the projects which are at the implementation stage have been delayed due to legal issues, delays in obtaining clearances from different departments, land acquisition challenges, construction in hilly areas, and challenges in vendor and resource availability in small and medium cities, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has said.*

About

- *The Smart Cities Mission is a flagship program launched by the Government of India in 2015 with the goal of promoting urban renewal and retrofitting to make cities more citizen-friendly and sustainable.*
- *It aims to develop 100 cities across the country, making them sustainable and improving the quality of life by using technology-driven solutions and innovations.*

Objectives

- **Core Mission:** *To drive economic growth and improve the quality of life of people by enabling local area development and harnessing technology.*
- **Sustainability:** *Focus on creating cities that are sustainable in terms of energy use, waste management, and green infrastructure.*
- **Inclusive Growth:** *Ensuring that development reaches all sections of the society.*

Key Features

- **Citizen-centric Planning:** *Citizen participation is a key component. Cities are selected based on a competition where proposals are submitted by urban local bodies (ULBs) with inputs from residents.*
- **Area-Based Development:** *The mission focuses on three areas of development:*
- **Retrofitment:** *Improving existing infrastructure and services in a part of the city.*
- **Redevelopment:** *Rebuilding areas to modern standards with better infrastructure.*
- **Greenfield Development:** *Developing new areas with modern infrastructure.*
- **Pan-City Initiative:** *A pan-city solution aims at applying a smart solution to the entire city.*
It involves using technology to improve urban services like traffic management, water supply, and waste management.

Components

- **Smart Governance:** *Implementing transparent, efficient, and accountable governance systems. Promoting e-governance and public information systems.*
- **Smart Mobility:** *Improving urban mobility through intelligent traffic management systems, public transport, and non-motorized transport like cycling tracks and pedestrian paths.*
- **Smart Environment:** *Focus on green buildings, water conservation, solid waste management, energy efficiency, and pollution reduction.*
- **Smart Economy:** *Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, creating job opportunities, and boosting economic growth through smart infrastructure.*
- **Smart Living:** *Ensuring a higher quality of life through improved housing, better healthcare, education, and entertainment facilities.*

Implementation Strategy

- **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV):** *Each city has its own SPV responsible for planning, implementing, operating, monitoring, and evaluating smart city projects. The SPV is created as a joint venture between the state/union territory government and the urban local body (ULB).*
- **Funding:** *The central government provides ₹500 crore over five years to each city, and an equal amount is contributed by the state and local governments. Additional funds can be raised through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), loans, or bonds.*

Key Innovations

- **Smart Grids:** *Improving energy efficiency and ensuring a reliable supply of electricity.*
- **Smart Water Systems:** *Advanced technologies for water conservation, waste-water recycling, and reducing leakages.*
- **Digital Governance:** *Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for seamless governance, from digital payments to online services for citizens.*
- **Urban Mobility:** *Use of smart cards for public transportation, integrated multi-modal transport systems, real-time tracking of public transport.*

Challenges

- **Funding Issues:** *Raising adequate funds for large-scale urban development projects is a significant challenge.*
- **Coordination between agencies:** *Multiple agencies at the central, state, and local levels need to work in unison, which can be difficult.*
- **Inclusion and Equity:** *Ensuring that the benefits of smart city initiatives reach all sections of society, including marginalized and low-income groups.*

- **Data Security and Privacy:** *With the increasing use of technology, safeguarding data privacy and security becomes crucial.*

Conclusion

- *The Smart Cities Mission is a transformative initiative aimed at creating future-ready, sustainable, and inclusive cities in India.*
- *It is crucial for the urban future of India, addressing challenges like urban sprawl, resource management, and improving the quality of life.*

CVC report on corruption

Syllabus: GS-2; Governance

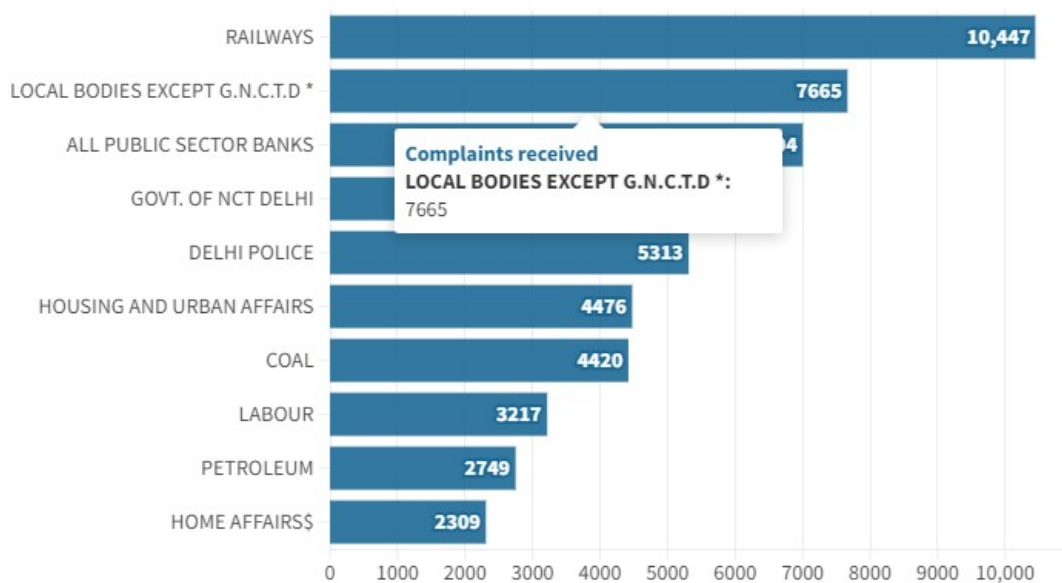
Context

- *Of the total corruption complaints received by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) last year, the highest number of complaints was against railway employees, followed by those in Delhi's local bodies and public sector banks, a report by the anti-graft watchdog showed.*

About the report

- *As many as 74,203 graft complaints were received against all categories of officers/employees in 2023, of which 66,373 were disposed of and 7,830 were pending, it said.*
- *The highest 10,447 complaints were made against railway employees, followed by 7,665 against staffers of "local bodies except GNCTD" (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi) in the national capital, said the CVC report made public recently.*

Graft complaints received



Source: [Central Vigilance Commission](#)

THE HINDU

What is the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)?

- **Establishment:** *The CVC was set up in 1964 following the recommendations of the Santhanam Committee to address issues of corruption in government offices. It operates under the provisions of the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.*
- **Purpose:** *It serves as an independent body that advises and assists in planning, executing, reviewing, and reforming vigilance activities to curb corruption in public administration.*
- **Jurisdiction:** *It has jurisdiction over the Central Government Departments, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), and other institutions that fall under the Government of India.*

Functions of CVC

- **Supervision of Vigilance Administration:** *The CVC oversees the vigilance activities of various departments to ensure accountability and transparency.*
- **Investigations:** *It has the power to recommend investigations by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or departmental vigilance authorities in cases of corruption.*
- **Advice:** *The CVC provides advice on vigilance cases related to officials in Group A and Group B services.*
- **Systemic Reforms:** *It proposes systemic changes and improvements to prevent corruption.*
- **Whistleblower Protection:** *It handles complaints under the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, ensuring confidentiality for those who report corruption.*

Impact of CVC on Governance

- **Good Governance:** *The CVC report's focus on preventive vigilance and curbing corruption contributes to good governance by ensuring transparency and accountability.*
- **Policy Reforms:** *The report often serves as a basis for policy reforms, aiming at reducing opportunities for corruption in public administration.*
- **Improved Public Trust:** *By acting on complaints and addressing corruption at various levels, the CVC helps in restoring public confidence in government institutions.*

Gap between allocation for health, outcomes in States

Syllabus: GS-2: Social Sector – Health.

Context:

- *Fiscal space and good operational frameworks at the State-level could make a difference to the efficacy of the Budget allocations for health schemes.*

Realisation of Health Sector Allocations in Union Budget

- **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS):** *Many Union Budget health sector allocations are directed towards CSS, where States play a crucial role in sharing costs and implementing the schemes.*
- **State-level Factors:** *The success of these allocations depends on States' fiscal space and operational frameworks.*

Major CSS Initiatives for Strengthening Health Infrastructure

- **Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM):**
 - **Focus:** **Building Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs), Block-level Public Health Units (BPHUs), Integrated District Public Health Laboratories (IDPHLs), and Critical Care Hospital Blocks (CCHBs).**
 - **Goal:** *Enhance India's preparedness for health emergencies (e.g., pandemics).*
- **Human Resources for Health and Medical Education (HRHME):**
 - **Focus:** *Expanding medical personnel by setting up new **medical, nursing, and paramedical colleges** and increasing seats.*

- *Additional Focus: **Upgrading district hospitals** and linking them with medical colleges.*

Low Fund Utilisation

➤ **PM-ABHIM:**

- *2022-23: **29%** of Budget Estimates (BE) utilised.*
- *2023-24: **50%** of BE utilised (Revised Estimate), expected to be lower in actuals.*

➤ **HRHME:**

- *2022-23 & 2023-24: Only **25%** of BE utilised.*
- **Budget Cuts:** *Due to low utilisation, Budget allocations for both PM-ABHIM and HRHME have been reduced.*

Reasons for Low Fund Utilisation

➤ **AB-HWCs:**

- **15th Finance Commission Health Grants:** *Only **45%** of the recommended funds utilised between 2021-24.*
- **Complex Execution:** *Difficulties in fund absorption due to complex structures.*

➤ **IDPHLs:**

- **Integration:** *States were required to integrate public health labs from different programs, causing delays in planning and implementation.*

➤ **Construction Delays:**

- *Rigid procedures and overlapping funding from multiple sources have caused delays in implementing BPHUs and CCHBs.*

Faculty Shortages

➤ **HRHME:**

- **Faculty Vacancies:** *40% shortage in new AIIMS institutions, and a **30% vacancy** in teaching positions in newly established government medical colleges (e.g., Uttar Pradesh).*
- **District Hospitals:** *Upgrading hospitals to medical colleges faces challenges due to shortages of specialists.*

➤ **Rural Health:**

- **Specialist Vacancies:** 33% of specialist positions in **urban CHCs** and 66% in **rural CHCs** were vacant in March 2022.

Fiscal Space in States

- **Recurring Costs:** States must bear recurring costs to maintain infrastructure under PM-ABHIM and HRHME post-2025-26.
- **Additional Financial Commitment:** States need to allocate additional funds for these schemes and their own health programs.

Key Challenges for Effective Implementation

- **Fiscal Capacity:** States must plan for recurring expenditures post-Union Government support.
- **Human Resources:** Addressing shortages of medical staff and specialists is critical.
- **Public Financial Management:** Improvements in scheme execution and grant management are needed to ensure effective use of allocated funds.

Conclusion

- **Transforming Allocations into Outcomes:** Realising the full potential of health sector budget allocations depends on State fiscal capacity, human resource management, and efficient financial processes. These factors are essential to ensuring the productivity of capital expenditure in the health sector.

Latest ILO study

Syllabus: GS-2; International Institutions- Reports & Indices

Context

- Inequality is on the rise as the share of labour income has stagnated worldwide and a large share of youth remain out of employment, education, or training, according to the **International Labour Organisation's (ILO) World Employment and Social Outlook: September 2024 Update**, released in Geneva.
- A major reason for this fall in labour income, according to the report, is **artificial intelligence or AI**.

Report Summary

- **Global Unemployment Increase**

- *Global unemployment is expected to rise by 2 million in 2024, following a temporary post-pandemic recovery*
- **Rising Inequality**
 - *Income inequality is widening due to stagnant productivity, inflation, and wage erosion, particularly in G20 countries*
- **Informal Employment**
 - *Despite efforts to formalize labor, 58% of the global workforce remains in informal employment*
 - **Extreme Poverty:**
 - *The number of workers earning less than \$2.15 per day grew by 1 million in 2023, highlighting the persistent issue of extreme poverty*
- **Uneven Recovery**
 - *While high-income countries show lower unemployment rates (4.5%), low-income nations face much higher rates (5.7%), indicating a disparity in recovery.*
- **Inflation Impact**
 - *Real wages have declined in many countries, as inflation outpaced wage growth, exacerbating living standards erosion.*
- **Women and Youth Participation**
 - *Despite improvements, significant gender and youth unemployment gaps persist, especially in emerging and developing economies.*
- **Call for Social Justice**
 - *The ILO urges urgent policy interventions to promote social justice and achieve a fair, sustainable economic recovery.*

Project Strawberry

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – IT.

Context:

- **OpenAI**, a leading artificial intelligence research organization, is expected to release its **most powerful AI model in Fall 2024** (September-November).
- This new model is likely to be integrated into **ChatGPT-5**, enhancing its capabilities beyond the current version launched in **late 2022**.
- The project, originally called **Project Q*** (Q-star), is now codenamed **Project Strawberry** and is aimed at developing **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)** — AI with human-like reasoning abilities.

Key Features of Project Strawberry

- **Autonomous Internet Research:** *This feature allows the model to browse the web and gather information independently.*
- **Enhanced Reasoning Abilities:** *The model is expected to significantly improve in areas like logic, reasoning, and problem-solving.*
- **Mathematical and Programming Expertise:** *It is projected to surpass existing chatbots in handling math and programming tasks.*
- **Focus on AI Advancements:** *The model aims to push towards **Artificial General Intelligence**.*

Public Confirmation and Demonstrations

- **Sam Altman**, CEO of OpenAI, posted an image of strawberries on **August 7, 2024**, which was seen as confirmation of the project.
- OpenAI has demonstrated a version of this model to **national security officials** to address concerns related to AI's rapid development.

Key Improvements

- **Mathematical Abilities:**
 - *Current AI models, including ChatGPT, have faced challenges with complex math problems, often due to limited mathematical data.*
 - *Project Strawberry is expected to excel in math and programming, overcoming these limitations.*
- **Advanced Puzzle Solving:**
 - *Reports suggest the model can solve advanced puzzles like **The New York Times 'Connections'**, demonstrating enhanced cognitive abilities.*

Project Strawberry and Future AI Models

- **Project Orion:** *OpenAI's next model, codenamed **Orion**, is being developed to outperform GPT-4. Project Strawberry will play a key role in **training** Orion using high-quality data.*
- **Data Limitations:**
 - *Most of the free training data available on the internet has already been utilized.*

- *Project Strawberry will generate **high-quality synthetic data** to overcome the scarcity of publicly accessible data.*

Synthetic Data for AI Training

➤ **Synthetic Data Generation:**

- *OpenAI is experimenting with synthetic data, created by **Generative AI** models, to fill gaps in real-world data.*
- **Benefits:**
 - *Reduces biases, errors, and hallucinations in AI models.*
 - *Improves the **efficiency of training** and **accuracy** of AI outputs.*

➤ **High-Quality Data for Training:**

- *Synthetic data can make future AI models more **neutral** and **balanced**, offering more **inclusive** and **accurate** training.*

Potential Applications

➤ **Scientific Research:**

- *With its improved reasoning and research abilities, Project Strawberry could autonomously conduct experiments, analyse data, and propose new hypotheses.*
- *Potential for **scientific breakthroughs**, such as discovering new drugs.*

➤ **Personalized Education:**

- *The model could offer tailored educational content, create **interactive lessons**, and assist in personalised learning experiences.*

Conclusion

- ***Project Strawberry** is a significant leap in AI research, promising enhanced cognitive abilities, superior reasoning, and autonomous research capabilities.*
- *It is expected to push OpenAI's vision of **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)** forward and lay the groundwork for future models like **Project Orion**, making AI more reliable and impactful across sectors like education, healthcare, and research.*