

9. Short News

1. 'E-sign' for Voter Verification

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has mandated Aadhaar-linked phone verification for all online voter registration, correction, and deletion requests. This follows allegations of fraudulent activities in Karnataka's Aland constituency.

About the 'E-sign' Feature - The ECI has integrated an 'e-sign' feature into its ECINet portal and mobile app to bolster the security and authenticity of online voter applications.

Working Mechanism - Applicants using Form 6 (new voter registration), Form 7 (deletion), or Form 8 (correction) must now verify their identity with an OTP sent to their Aadhaar-linked mobile number. The system cross-verifies that the name on the voter application matches the name on the Aadhaar card and that the mobile number is linked to that specific Aadhaar ID.

Significance - This two-factor authentication process significantly reduces the risk of unauthorized or fraudulent voter registrations and deletions, ensuring the integrity of the electoral roll.

2. 'Nightmare Bacteria'

A recent report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed that infections from drug-resistant "nightmare bacteria" rose by nearly 70% between 2019 and 2023, largely driven by the NDM gene.

About 'Nightmare Bacteria' - These are carbapenem-resistant bacteria, meaning they are highly resistant to a broad range of antibiotics, including last-resort drugs. Infections caused by these bacteria are extremely difficult to treat, often requiring expensive intravenous administration of the few remaining effective antibiotics.

About the NDM Gene - The New Delhi Metallo- β -lactamase-1 (NDM-1) gene was first identified in New Delhi in 2008. This gene produces an enzyme that neutralizes most β -lactam antibiotics, making the bacteria a multidrug-resistant "superbug".

3. Tylenol (Paracetamol) and Pregnancy

U.S. President Donald Trump recently claimed that Tylenol (acetaminophen/paracetamol) use during pregnancy is linked to autism, a claim that contradicts the overwhelming scientific and medical consensus.

Medical and Scientific Consensus - Global health experts, including former WHO Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, maintain that paracetamol is the safest painkiller for pregnant women. A massive Swedish study of 2.4 million children found no increased risk of autism or other neurodevelopmental disorders linked to paracetamol use during pregnancy.

Official Stance - The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the evidence linking paracetamol to autism as "inconsistent" and reaffirmed its safety during pregnancy. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists also confirms that there is no proven risk of autism linked to paracetamol.

Health Risks of Avoidance - Doctors warn that avoiding paracetamol to treat high fever during pregnancy could be dangerous for both the mother and the baby.

4. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya on his 109th birth anniversary, which is celebrated as Antyodaya Diwas on September 25th.

About Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-1968) - He was a lifelong campaigner (pracharak) of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and a prominent leader of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the precursor to the BJP.

Key Philosophies -

Integral Humanism (Ekatma Manav Darshan) - An indigenous socio-economic model that seeks a holistic and balanced development of the individual and society by integrating the body, mind, intellect, and soul. It was proposed as an alternative to both Capitalism and Communism.

Antyodaya - A core principle that emphasizes uplifting the last person in the queue, focusing policy and development on the most marginalized and weakest sections of society.

5. Expansion of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)

The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of 22 new AIIMS across the country under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).

Capacity Enhancement – This expansion is set to add 5,000 postgraduate (PG) seats and 5,023 undergraduate (MBBS) seats by 2028–29.

Benefits of Expansion – It will significantly increase the number of available doctors and specialists in the country. It aims to correct regional imbalances in healthcare access by establishing tertiary care facilities in underserved areas.

About PMSSY – Launched in 2006, this central government scheme aims to reduce regional disparities in affordable tertiary healthcare and enhance the quality of medical education in the country.

6. Agni-Prime (Agni-P) Missile

India recently conducted a successful test of the Agni-Prime missile from a specially designed rail-based mobile launcher.

About Agni-Prime – It is India's next-generation medium/intermediate-range ballistic missile (up to 2,000 km range), developed by DRDO to replace older Agni variants.

Key Features of the New System

Canisterised System – The missile is sealed in a canister, which allows for long-term storage, rapid transport, and quick launch with reduced detection.

Rail-Based Launcher – This new launcher allows the missile to be transported and launched from anywhere on the country's vast railway network. This offers superior cross-country mobility and survivability compared to fixed or road-mobile launchers.

Strategic Significance – The successful test marks India's entry into a select group of nations with canisterised rail-launch capability. It significantly enhances India's second-strike capability and the survivability of its nuclear deterrent by making the missile system much harder for an adversary to track and target.

7. Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)

The Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, recently launched the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) in New Delhi.

About GSTAT – It is a statutory appellate body established under GST laws to serve as the second forum for appeal and to resolve disputes independently.

Structure and Composition – It consists of a Principal Bench in New Delhi and 31 State Benches across the country. Each bench will have two Judicial Members and two Technical Members (one from the Centre, one from the State), ensuring a balance of legal expertise and administrative knowledge.

Digital Integration – The GSTAT e-Courts Portal will enable taxpayers to file appeals online, track cases, and participate in virtual hearings, promoting a "digital-first" approach.

Significance – The tribunal is expected to reduce the burden on High Courts, ensure faster dispute resolution, and enhance the ease of doing business. It embodies the principle of "One Nation, One Forum for Fairness and Certainty" in the indirect tax regime.