

Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

➤ International Relations:

1. U.S. blacklists 24 Chinese firms amid South China Sea dispute

PAPER 3:

➤ Economy:

1. SC hits out at Centre on loan moratorium scheme
2. Brahmaputra ropeway suspended due to snag
3. Gujarat tops exports index: NITI Aayog

➤ Health:


1. Draft policy on health data open for feedback
2. What is the NDHM?



SC hits out at Centre on loan moratorium scheme

➤ The Supreme Court on Wednesday criticised the Union government for “hiding behind the Reserve Bank of India” without making its stand clear on the loan moratorium scheme introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

 **Government of India has ample powers under Disaster Management Act. You should clarify two issues: whether interest can be charged and whether interest on interest can be levied**

 **The issue was created by your lockdown. Now you cannot look into business alone but plight of people should also be looked into**



- The top court wanted to know whether the deferment of loan interest to prop up borrowers through their financial crisis during the national lockdown would lead to accrual of further interest once the freeze is lifted on August 31. The government is yet to file its affidavit.
- The court noted that the issue had been pending indecisively for some months now and advised the government against adopting a blinkered vision, focusing only on matters of business of banks and not looking at the plight of the people financially dented by the “problems created by your lockdown”. It said the government was empowered to take an independent stand under the Disaster Management Act.

Brahmaputra ropeway suspended due to snag

- The 1.82-km Brahmaputra ropeway in Guwahati, said to be the **longest in India across a river**, has been suspended within 48 hours of its official launch on August 24 due to malfunctioning of the motor that powers it. An official of the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) said.

Draft policy on health data open for feedback

Draft Health Data Management Policy of the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM):

- The **National Health Authority (NHA)** has released the draft Health Data Management Policy of the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) in the public domain. The draft has been released on the website of the NDHM and will be available for public comments and feedback till September 3. The policy will be finalised after receiving suggestions from the public.

Significance:

- NHA Chief Executive Officer Indu Bhushan said, “The draft is the maiden step in realising the NDHM’s guiding principle of ‘Security and Privacy by Design’ for the protection of individuals’ data privacy. It encompasses various aspects pertaining to health data such as data privacy, consent management, data sharing and protection etc.”

Main objectives:

- One of the main objectives of the draft policy is to provide adequate guidance and to set out a framework for the secure processing of **personal and sensitive personal data** of individuals who are a part of the national digital health ecosystem.
- This will be in compliance with all applicable laws and international standards that define the set of frameworks of consent for the collection and processing of health data by healthcare practitioners and other entities, and other relevant standards related to data interoperability and data sharing, said a release by the NHA.

Value Added Information

What is the NDHM?

- The NDHM is part of the National Digital Health Blueprint (NDHB).
- [NDHB aims to enhance the healthcare delivery by setting up a core e-health database of international standards.
- It allows patients to have control over their health data.
- The NDHM envisages creating a national health ID for every Indian.



- It wants to make use technology to streamline processes such as record-keeping, sharing of healthcare data and similar healthcare processes.
- This well-timed move will help citizens make informed decisions on treatments.

Is the fund allocated enough?

- The NDHM is supposed to cover all government health programmes to begin with.
- This will be a huge exercise and would require more resources than the currently allocated ₹144 crore.
- This will make private participation a necessity given the strained finances of the Centre.

What is the potential of this mission?

- It has the potential to transform the healthcare sector.
- It can make the healthcare sector more technologically advanced, inclusive and delivery-driven.

What is the further kind of data that should be integrated?

- Such centralised data, combined with real-time Big Data analytics, can become a surveillance tool.
- Healthcare data from wearable devices are getting mainstreamed.
- This data is used by the healthcare providers, doctors and patients for diagnosis, if not for treatment.
- So, the NDHM should spell out its stand on collecting such data from individuals and integrating it with the unique health ID.

What are the challenges?

- The NDHM gives rise to logistical challenges and privacy concerns.
- It involves government collaboration between hospitals in both public as well as private sectors, labs, insurance firms, pharmacies and telemedicine.
- So, there is a risk of exposing individual healthcare data to hacking and commercial misuse.



- Although the NDHM is now a voluntary exercise, it could become mandatory for availing government health services.
- In such a context, ensuring the safety of individual health data becomes paramount.

What could be done?

- The government must gain the confidence of all stakeholders, including rights groups, before going ahead.
- There should be more clarity on questions such as:
- Who will maintain and manage the centralised repository of citizen's health data;
- Who will own the data — the individual or the state;
- Whether individuals can transfer the data between service providers and
- Whether the individual has the right to erase irrelevant healthcare data and maintain 'his or her right to be forgotten'.
- Insurance companies should not be allowed to misuse personal data.
- The NDHM must be in compliance with the global best practices on data privacy, like the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.
- The potential and pitfalls of digitisation of health data must be appreciated before moving ahead.

U.S. blacklists 24 Chinese firms amid South China Sea dispute

- The United States on Wednesday blacklisted 24 Chinese companies and targeted a number of individuals it said were part of construction and military actions related to disputed islands in the South China Sea.
- The move marked the Trump administration's latest efforts to crack down on companies whose goods may support Chinese military activities.

Act of intimidation:

- The United States accuses China of militarising the South China Sea and trying to intimidate Asian neighbors who might want to exploit its extensive oil and gas reserves.



- The U.S. has conducted multiple freedom of navigation operations by sending its warships through the area to assert the freedom of access to international waterways.
- China claims 90% of the potentially energy-rich South China Sea, but Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also lay claim to parts of an area through which about \$3 trillion of trade passes each year.

Gujarat tops exports index: NITI Aayog

Export Preparedness Index 2020:

- Gujarat tops the Export Preparedness Index 2020 to evaluate States' potential and capacities, followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
- The index was released by government think-tank NITI Aayog on Wednesday.
- The other States that have made it to the top 10 include Rajasthan, Odisha, Telangana, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Kerala.
- The index ranks States on policy, business ecosystem, export ecosystem and export performance. Overall, coastal States emerged as the best performers, with six out of eight coastal States featuring in the top 10 rankings.
- In the landlocked States, Rajasthan performed the best, followed by Telangana and Haryana.