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HOW AYUSHMAN BHARAT IS SAVING LIVES

- The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) represents a crucial chapter in India's journey toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
- Introduced with the vision of PM Modi, the program's design, implementation, and continued expansion underscore India's commitment to improving health outcomes and reducing economic burden of medical expenses on vulnerable populations.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

- AB-PMJAY is a flagship health insurance scheme launched by the Government of India on September 23, 2018, to provide financial protection against high medical costs for economically vulnerable families.
- Targeting around 10.74 crore vulnerable families (approximately 500 million individuals), the scheme offers a health cover of up to ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.
- It covers about 1,350 medical packages, including surgeries, treatments, medicines, and diagnostics, and ensures cashless and paperless treatment across public and empanelled private hospitals.
- Implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) in collaboration with state health agencies, AB-PMJAY operates through two main components: PMJAY, which focuses on providing health insurance, and Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs), which deliver primary healthcare services.

An Assessment of the Impact of AB-PMJAY on Healthcare Access

- Reducing Financial Barriers and Ensuring Access to Care
 - Prior to the implementation of PMJAY, many low-income families faced a significant risk of slipping into poverty due to high out-of-pocket expenses on healthcare.

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- By covering hospitalisation costs, PMJAY has provided a financial cushion that allows families to seek treatment without worrying about immediate expenses.
- **Improving Health Equity and Reaching Underserved Populations**
 - The scheme specifically targets economically weaker sections of society, thereby ensuring that those most in need of financial protection can access essential healthcare services.
- **Expanding the Range of Treatments Available**
 - Since the scheme's launch, the Health Benefit Package (HBP) has been revised and expanded, increasing the number of procedures covered from 1,393 in 2018 to 1,949 by 2022.
 - This expansion includes a wide range of treatments and procedures for serious conditions, such as cardiac surgeries, cancer therapies, and orthopaedic interventions, which are typically unaffordable for those without insurance.
- **Empowering Families Through Cashless Treatment**
 - The cashless nature of PMJAY means that patients do not need to pay anything out of pocket at the time of admission or treatment.
 - This is particularly beneficial in emergencies, where delays in treatment due to lack of immediate funds could be life-threatening.

Conclusion

- **AB-PMJAY is more than a healthcare scheme;** it is a cornerstone of India's vision for a healthier and more prosperous nation.
 - Health is a fundamental pillar of societal well-being, productivity, and national progress, and through PMJAY, India has taken a significant step toward ensuring that its citizens receive the care they need to live healthy, dignified lives.
 - As India moves toward the goal of building a Viksit Bharat (Developed India), PMJAY will continue to play a pivotal role.
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KEY FACTS ABOUT ENGLISH CHANNEL



The English Channel is a narrow arm of the Atlantic Ocean.

- It separates the southern coast of England (part of Great Britain) from the northern coast of France.
- The channel and the North Sea are connected by the Strait of Dover in the east.
- The current name, “English Channel,” dates back to the 18th century. Before then, the English mostly referred to the waterway as a “Narrow Sea.”
- The French refer to the Channel as “la Manche” because of its sleeve like shape.
- With an area of some 29,000 square miles (75,000 square km), it is the smallest of the shallow seas covering the continental shelf of Europe.
- It is 350 miles (560 kilometers) long. At its widest point, it is 150 miles (240 kilometers) across. At its narrowest, it is only 21 miles (34 kilometers) across.
- It is a shallow waterway with an average depth of 63 m.

Climate: Temperate maritime climate, with warm summers and cold winters.

- The main islands are the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands (a collection of islands including Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, and Sark).
- It is one of the world’s busiest shipping areas, linking southern England, the United Kingdom to northern France.
- It accounts for up to 20% of the global maritime trade and connects the Atlantic Ocean to the North Sea.

WHAT ARE ECO-SENSITIVE ZONES?



- As per the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016), issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, land within 10 km of the boundaries of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries is to be notified as eco-fragile zones or Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ).



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- While the 10-km rule is implemented as a general principle, the extent of its application can vary.
- Areas beyond 10 km can also be notified by the Union government as ESZs if they hold larger ecologically important “sensitive corridors”.
- It acts as a buffer zone around Protected Areas — national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves, etc. — so that the wildlife has a transition zone around them.

Significance of ESZ

- Eco-Sensitive Zones are created as “shock absorbers” for the protected areas, to minimize the negative impact on the “fragile ecosystems” by certain human activities taking place nearby.
 - These areas are meant to act as a transition zone from areas requiring higher protection to those requiring lesser protection.
 - Permitted activities in ESZ: Ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, among others.
 - No commercial mining, stone quarrying, large hydroelectric projects, polluting industries, brick kilns, etc. are allowed in ESZ.
 - Commercial establishment of hotels, resorts, small-scale non-polluting industries and the construction of civic amenities are regulated.
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JUDICIAL ACTIVISM IN INDIA

- Judicial Activism refers to the proactive role played by the judiciary in protecting and expanding the rights of citizens and ensuring that justice prevails, especially when other branches of the government (executive and legislature) fail to do so.
- In India, judicial activism has been instrumental in shaping the country’s socio-political landscape by holding authorities accountable and upholding the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India.



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Meaning and Scope of Judicial Activism:

- Judicial Activism implies the judiciary's intervention in legislative and executive matters by interpreting laws in a manner that ensures justice, fairness, and constitutional values are upheld. It often involves:
 - **Broad interpretations of the Constitution** to secure rights for citizens.
 - **Directing government action** to address inaction or failure in fulfilling constitutional duties.
 - **Taking suo motu cognizance** (acting on its own accord) of issues related to public interest.

Constitutional Basis for Judicial Activism:

- Several articles in the Indian Constitution serve as the foundation for judicial activism:
 - **Article 32 – Right to Constitutional Remedies:**
 - Article 32 is often referred to as the "heart and soul" of the Constitution, as described by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.
 - It empowers citizens to approach the Supreme Court for enforcement of their fundamental rights.
 - This provision forms the backbone of **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)**, a tool often used in judicial activism to provide justice to marginalized sections of society.
 - **Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty:**
 - Article 21 has been widely interpreted by the judiciary to include various rights that ensure a dignified life, such as the right to privacy, right to a clean environment, right to education, and right to health.
 - The **expansion of the scope of Article 21** is a hallmark of judicial activism in India.
 - **Article 142 – Enforcement of Decrees and Orders of the Supreme Court:**

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- This article empowers the Supreme Court to pass any order necessary for doing "complete justice" in any matter pending before it.
- This is often seen as a significant tool for the Court to act in the interest of justice, even in cases where statutory law may not explicitly provide a remedy.

Criticism of Judicial Activism:

- **Judicial Overreach:**
 - Critics argue that in some cases, the judiciary has overstepped its boundaries, venturing into areas reserved for the executive or legislature, thereby violating the **separation of powers**
 - Some argue that judicial activism can evolve into **judicial overreach**, where courts make policy decisions instead of interpreting the law.
 - **Lack of Accountability:**
 - Unlike elected representatives, judges are not accountable to the public, raising concerns that judicial activism might sometimes reflect the personal biases of judges rather than democratic principles.
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VISIT OF PRESIDENT OF MALDIVES TO INDIA

Maldives is India's key maritime neighbor in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and holds a special place in Prime Minister's vision of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy'.

Significance of Maldives for India

- **Strategic Importance**
 - Maldives is barely 70 nautical miles away from Minicoy and 300 nautical miles away from India's West coast. It is situated at the hub of commercial sea-lanes running through Indian Ocean (particularly the 8° N and 1 ½° N channels).

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- **Geo-political interest**
 - Securing sea lanes of communication; Fighting piracy and sea-based terrorism;
 - Making Indian Ocean a conflict free zone and restoring its status as sea of tranquil;
 - Exploring blue economy and Enhancing trade; Security of Indian expatriates working there.
- **China Angle**
 - The Maldives has emerged as an important 'pearl' in China's "String of Pearls" construct in South Asia.
- **Internal security angle: Radicalisation**
 - In the past, the number of Maldivians drawn towards terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS) had increased.
 - Political instability and socio-economic uncertainty are further fuelling the rise of Islamist radicalism in the island nation.
 - This gives rise to the possibility of remote Maldivian islands being used as a launch pad for terror attacks against India and Indian interests.

India – Maldives Bilateral Relation

- **Background**
 - India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.
- **India as a first responder and net security provider**
 - In 1988, under **Operation Cactus** the Indian Armed Forces helped the Government of Maldives in the neutralization of the coup attempt.
 - India was the first to assist Maldives during the 2004 Tsunami as well as the water crisis in Malé in Dec 2014.
 - India had swift dispatch of 30,000 doses of measles vaccine in Jan 2020 to prevent an outbreak in the Maldives.

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- **Security & Defence Cooperation**
 - A comprehensive Action Plan for Defence was also signed in April 2016 to consolidate defence partnership.
 - India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements. India has trained over 1500 MNDF trainees over the past 10 years.
 - **Development Cooperation**
 - The major completed and ongoing development assistance projects executed by India are:
 - Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital
 - Maldives Institute of Technical Education (now called the Maldives Polytechnic)
 - India-Maldives Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism Studies
 - Technology Adoption Programme in Education Sector in Maldives
 - National College for Police and Law Enforcement (NCPLE)
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HOW NEW DELHI VIEWS THE CONFLICTS IN THE WEST ASIAN REGION?



What Israel is Doing?

- **Attacks on Gaza:**
 - Since the October 7 attacks, operations by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have caused a heavy death toll in Gaza.
 - While the international opinion in favour of **Palestinian statehood** has strengthened over the past year, Israeli political opinion **rejecting Palestinian sovereignty** has strengthened at the same time.
- **Attacking Iran-backed “axis of resistance” groups:**
 - Israel has made an effort to maintain its military edge against the Iran-backed - **Hezbollah** (Lebanon-based) and the **Houthis** (Yemen-based) - by carrying out strikes in Syria, Yemen and Lebanon.

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- Both (Hezbollah and Houthis) were carrying out rocket and missile attacks on Israel since late last year.
- **Ignoring calls for peace:** Israel has ignored a call for ceasefire by the UNSC and US advice of restraint.
- **Retaliating Iran:** Israel also retaliated after Iran launched an unprecedented cruise missile and drone barrage against it (in April), and has vowed to make the regime in Tehran pay for a second wave of aerial attacks on October 1.

What is the View of New Delhi on West Asian Conflicts?

- **Telephonic diplomacy:**
 - The Indian PM spoke to Netanyahu on the phone both in October 2023 and 2024, **expressing concern and offering solidarity.**
 - He also spoke to President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine, **reiterating India's commitment to the two-state solution.**
 - **Keeping terrorism issue and the question of Israel and Palestine separate:**
 - This has allowed New Delhi to express sympathy and support for Israel after the October 7 terrorist attacks while refraining from backing its two-state solution of Palestinian sovereignty.
 - Emphasising the close connection between sustainable peace and a two-state solution, India has continuously supported UNGA resolutions that demand Israel to leave the occupied territory.
 - **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:**
 - Prior to the new crisis, India sought to spearhead the effort to capitalise on the regional reset through the planned India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.
 - However, the success of India's connectivity ambitions hinges not just on a truce in Gaza and Lebanon but also on how the Arab governments handle the aftermath of the conflict.
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