



## PLUTUS ACADEMY

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#### 1.PM Modi launches “Ghar Tak Fibre” scheme in Bihar

On September 21, 2020, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched nine highway projects and Optical Fibre Internet Services in Bihar. The optical fibre services are being provided under the scheme “Ghar Tak Fibre”.

#### Highlights

The Highway projects are to construct 350 km of road. The roads are to be built at a cost of Rs 14,250 crores. These road projects will improve movement of people with Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Also, the roads will help in better connectivity, enhance convenience and economic growth in and around the state.

#### Background

In 2015, the Prime Minister had announced a special package for the state of Bihar. It included 75 projects worth Rs 54,700 crores. Out of these 75 projects, 13 have been completed and 38 are under implementation. As these projects are completed, the National Highways in the state will stand strengthened and widened. Also, the rivers will have bridges to the specifications of the 21st century.

#### Optical Fibre Services

These services are to be executed along with combined efforts of the Common Service Centre. The project is to be implemented by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology under the scheme “Ghar Tak Fibre”. The project will connect 45,945 villages in the state and will thus enable Digital revolution to reach the farthest corner of Bihar.

#### Ghar Tak Fibre scheme

The scheme aims to provide optical fibre enabled internet connections to every home in the country, concentrating on village and rural areas. During his 74<sup>th</sup> independence-day address, PM Modi had said that over 1.5 lakh village panchayats have received optical fiber connections after 2014 under the scheme. The CSC Wi-Fi Choupal is an initiative to

provide high speed internet connectivity to rural India. It ensures digital connectivity using Bharat Net.

### **Digital India**

The villages in Bihar are being provided Wi-Fi connections under Digital India Programme. The program has launched several initiatives in the country to bring in the digital revolution. They are Digital Locker System, Bharat Net, national scholarship portals, online registration systems, etc.

The Govt is currently planning to make “Digital Village” all over the country. This is to be achieved by linking all schemes with technology. The Digital Villages will be powered by solar energy, LED lighting, e-services such as education and health.

## **2. September 21: World Peace Day**

Every year, the World Peace Day is celebrated on September 21. The day is also called International Day of Peace. It is celebrated by the United Nations and also by the other world organisations.

### **Highlights**

The World Peace Day was first established by the United Nations in 1981. It was dedicated to peace education by the United Nations in 2013. Every year the United Nations Peace Bell is rung at the United Nations headquarters in New York city on the World Peace Day. This marks the inauguration of the day.

This year the day is being celebrated under the theme

### **Theme: Shaping Peace Together**

According to the United Nations, the day is dedicated to strengthen peace in the world. This is being done by observing 24 hours of nonviolence and ceasefire all over the world.

### **Peace Bell**

The peace bell at the United Nations headquarters in New York city was an official gift of the Japanese people to the organisation. It was presented on June 8 1954 when Japan was not officially admitted to the United Nations. The bell was made from metal in the coins donated by delegates of 60 Nations that attended the 13th general conference of the United Nations. It was held in Paris France in 1951. This Peace Bell is rung twice a year. The bell is tolled on the first day of the spring, when the United Nations celebrates Earth Day. The Earth day is celebrated on April 22 to promote environmental protection. The bell is then rung on the eve of the opening of the United Nations general assembly which usually coincides with the International Day of peace.

### **Symbol of World Peace Day**

Dove is the symbol of world peace day as well. In 1949, the “Dove of Peace” painting of the legendary Spanish artist Picasso was chosen as the Emblem of the first International Peace Conference that was held in Paris. Eventually, dove was adopted as a symbol of peace at every peace conference then on.

### **3. Neighbourhood First Policy: PM Modi to hold e-Summit with Sri Lanka**

On September 26, 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold his first virtual Summit with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The meeting is expected to be held on the sidelines of the United Nations general assembly. Apart from Sri Lanka India is expected to hold several other meets with its neighbourhood in the near future.

#### **Highlights**

India will also hold several other virtual summits with its neighbour countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan to boost its neighbourhood first policy of the country. The external affairs minister S Jaishankar is expected to hold a meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart. The leaders are expected to frame a roadmap for two years to take the relationship between the countries to the next level. The export of onions from India to Bangladesh has become one of the major irritants between the countries. The India-Myanmar foreign office consultations are to be resumed because of the Chinese crisis. Also, India has reached out to the Afghan government and a series of high-level visits from the country is to be expected in the coming days.

On September 20, 2020, Maldives, a maritime neighborhood of India received 250 million USD to overcome its economic situation due to covid-19. The Maldives government shall use the funds for whatever important condition without being dictated by India.

#### **Significance**

With growing assertiveness of China in the Indian Ocean region it is important for India to establish strong relations with its Maritime neighbourhood, especially Sri Lanka.

#### **Way forward**

In the Western Indian ocean India must expand its policy towards islands such as Reunion, Madagascar and Diego Garcia. These islands are neither included under Maritime neighbours of India nor under the neighbourhood first policy. However, they play a significant role in Maritime security of India. The reunion Island is a part of France and the Garcia Islands post a major American military facility. In the Eastern Indian ocean India should focus on Cocos and Keeling Islands that belongs to Australia Under SAGAR vision, India has signalled its readiness in promoting regional security and prosperity. India has also opened its Gates for collaboration with countries such as the United States, France Australia and Japan especially in the Indian Ocean region to

counter Chinese influence. On these terms India should thus formulate neighbourhood first policy 2.0.

#### **4. Govt to amend FCRA: Bill Introduced in Lok Sabha**

A bill was recently introduced in Lok Sabha to amend the FCRA act, 2010. FCRA act is Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. The bill proposed to include public corporations owned and controlled by the Government of India under the list of entities that are not eligible to receive foreign funding. The bill also proposed to include public servants under the list.

#### **Highlights**

The bill also makes Aadhaar mandatory for all the non-government organisations and other organisations to seek foreign contributions. It has proposed to limit the foreign funds received under the act from 50% to 20%. These funds are predominantly used for administration purposes.

#### **Background**

- The main aim of the amendment is to streamline the provisions of FCRA act. The amendment aims to increase transparency and accountability. It also aims to strengthen compliance mechanisms in the utilisation of foreign contribution.
- Currently several organisations are transferring their foreign contributions under section 7 of FCRA, 2010. If amended this may not be possible. Also, the government will be empowered to question a violator upon the use of funds received from a foreign organisation.
- If the bill is passed the persons who have been granted certificates for the foreign funding will receive funding only through accounts that are designated as FCRA accounts. Such accounts can be opened only in banks designated by the government of India.

#### **Why the amendment?**

The Government of India states that the annual inflow of foreign funds has become twice between the time period of 2010 and 2019. However, the contributions received in this route were not utilised by the recipient registered under FCRA. Thus it is important to regulate these foreign contributions under the act.

#### **Rules imposed by the act**

The following conditions have been imposed by the act on the use of foreign funds

- The funds received by a Non governmental organisation from foreign contributors should compulsorily be used only for the purpose for which the funds were received.
- The funds shall not be used in speculative activities that or defined under the act.
- The funds shall not be transferred to an entity that is not registered under the act
- An asset purchased with the funds received, shall not be in the name of office members or bearers but only in the name of the organisation (NGO) that received the funding.

### **Definition of foreign contribution**

The term foreign contribution has been defined as an article on currency e other than a gift received from a foreign source for personal use in securities.

## **5.Sero Survey results communicated to the states**

The Indian Council of Medical Research recently announced that the results of sero survey conducted in ten cities have been communicated with the states. The survey that was conducted earlier this month indicated that around 0.73% of adults have been affected with the virus.

### **Findings of the second survey**

The second sero survey says that 15 to 48 percent of the population in the containment zones in 10 hotspot cities were exposed to COVID-19 infection.

### **Key Findings of the first survey**

- Around 6.4 million samples were collected by the Indian Council of Medical Research for the first sero survey. The survey says that the worst affected were those between the age of 18 and 45 years. Around 43.3 percent of individuals in this age group had developed antibodies against COVID-19. In the case of patients, in the age group between 46 and 60 years of age, around 39.5 percent have developed antibodies.
- The survey had been conducted in 30,283 households. Around 20,000 individuals were enrolled for the study.
- Males in urban slums had a high risk of exposure to the virus according to the survey. A total of 0.5% of individuals were reported to have contact history of COVID-19. Around 0.3% had tested positive before the survey.
- More than 51% in Pune tested positive for COVID-19. In Mumbai around 40 % of the sampled group are very infected.

### **About the survey**

Around 400 adults per district were enrolled in the survey. The samples were tested for Immunoglobulin G. It is a type of long-lasting antibody and is used in COVID-19 Kavach ELISA detection test.

### **Need of the hour**

In spite of a big increase in the number of tests being held, India needs to increase its testing capacity. This is because greater the number of tests greater the chance of detecting the infected people. This includes asymptomatic patients as well. This will help in timely isolation of patients to prevent transmission to other people.

### **Key takeaways**

The sero survey confirms that most of the COVID-19 infected patients are asymptomatic. The testing infrastructure in the country has improved and upgraded greatly. From a capacity to test a few hundred samples in March 2020 India is now equipped to test more than 8 lakh samples a day.

## **6.FELUDA: First Gene based COVID-19 test approved in India**

The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has recently approved the gene-based COVID-19 test called Feluda. The test was indigenously developed and uses cutting edge CRISPR gene editing technology to detect the COVID-19 virus.

### **Highlights**

The test was developed by scientists based in the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology CSIR-IDIB along with the TATA Group.

### **About the test**

The test will diagnose the virus in 2 hours. It is the first test in the world to deploy Cas9 protein to detect the virus. The test has 96 % of sensitivity and 98 % of specificity to detect the novel coronavirus. The cost of the test is estimated to be less than rupees 600. The test works well under laboratory conditions and is essential to validate under clinical settings. It validates faster, cheaper and accurate disease diagnosis for a range of diseases other than COVID-19. The FELUDA test has been developed under make in India initiative.

### **FELUDA**

FELUDA is the acronym of FNCAS9 editor linked uniform detection. It is a paper strip test

### **COVID-19 tests in India**

In India the following COVID-19 tests have been approved

#### **RT PCR**

It is Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction. In this test, copies of DNA are created using the enzyme called Polymerase. The Reverse Transcription technique converts RNA into DNA. This is because COVID-19 virus is made of RNA.

#### **Rapid Antigen Detection Test**

The test is conducted on swabbed nasal samples. It detects antigen that are found within the COVID-19 virus. Antigens are Foreign substances that induce an immune response of the body.

#### **ELISA Antibody tests**

The ELISA antibody test kits are called COVID KAVACH ELISA and were developed at the National Institute of Virology, Pune. ELISA is Enzymes Linked Immunosorbent Assay. It measures antibodies in the blood. It was earlier used to diagnose HIV, Zika virus, etc. It was also used in nationwide sero surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health.

Till today, the RT-PCR tests are in the front line for clinical diagnosis in India. However, the antibody tests are conducted for surveillance and for clear understanding of the proportion of the population exposed to COVID-19.

#### **Rapid Antibody Test**

This test is conducted on samples of mucus and saliva received from COVID-19 patients. It provides the results in 24 to 48 hours. These tests are also called serological tests.

#### **Saliva Direct Tests**

The test detects the nucleic acid from the COVID-19 virus. It is not a rapid test. It has to be done in certified clinical laboratories. The test received increased attention as compared to other tests as it is easy to detect, fewer steps in testing and collection of samples, and easy instrument accessibility.