



## Amendments to the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill

### Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper II
- ✓ Acts and Bills of the government, National Medical Commission Bill (NMC)

### Recently:

- ❖ The Union Cabinet has approved certain official amendments to the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill.
- ❖ The Government has considered the recommendations made by the Standing Committee in its report and general feedback, particularly the views of medical students and practitioners regarding certain provisions of the Bill.

### What are the Amendments?

- Final MBBS Examination to be held as a common exam across the country and would serve as an exit test called the National Exit Test (NEXT):
  - Thus, the students would not have to appear in a separate exam after MBBS to get license to practice.
  - NEXT would also serve as the screening test for doctors with foreign medical qualifications in order to practice in India.
- Provision of Bridge course for AYUSH practitioners to practice modern medicine removed:
  - The provision dealing with bridge course for AYUSH practitioners to practice modern medicine to a limited extent has also been removed.
  - It has been left to the State Governments to take necessary measures for addressing and promoting primary health care in rural areas.
- Fee regulation for 50% seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities:
  - The maximum limit of 40% seats for which fee would be regulated in private medical institutions and deemed universities has been increased to 50% seats.
  - Further, it has been clarified that the fee would also include all other charges taken by the colleges.
- Number of nominees from States and UTs in NMC increased from 3 to 6:
  - The NMC will comprise of 25 members of which at least 21 will be doctors.
- Monetary penalty for a medical college non-compliant with the norms replaced with provision for different penalty options
  - Another major concern gathered during discussion with stakeholders was the wide range of monetary penalty, ranging from one half to ten times the annual fee recovered from a batch, to be imposed in a graded manner on a medical college non-compliant with the norms.
  - The clause has been replaced with a provision which provides different options for warning, reasonable monetary penalty, reducing intake, stoppage of admission leading up to withdrawal of recognition.
- Stringent punishment for unqualified medical practitioners or quacks:
  - The government is concerned about the quality and safety of health care being made available to the citizens and the need to act strictly against unqualified practitioners or quacks.
- The punishment for any unauthorized practice of medicine has been made severe by including a provision for imprisonment of up to one year along with a fine extending up to Rs. 5 lakhs.



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## Cambridge Analytica Crisis

### Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 2
- ✓ About Cambridge Analytica Crisis
- ✓ Data collection and use by the firm
- ✓ Issues related to it and what can be done
- ✓ Vulnerability of India's cyber security and dangers abound in India

### Recently:

- ❖ Cambridge Analytica crisis exploded.
- ❖ Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad warned Facebook against the misuse of Indians' data and any attempt to influence the electoral processes of this country.
- ❖ There were media reports that a political consultancy that worked on President Donald Trump's campaign gained inappropriate access to data on 50 million Facebook users.
- ❖ The alleged scandal involving Cambridge Analytica's use of the data of more than 55 million Facebook users has reopened big questions about the organisation of the information order in a democracy.
- ❖ They have also revealed how the language of democracy is struggling to come to terms with complex technological developments.

### What is Cambridge Analytica?

- Cambridge Analytica (CA) is a British data firm.
- The firm has been drawing flak for its alleged role in influencing the behaviour of voters in the 2016 presidential election campaign, and for helping the 'Leave' side in the Brexit referendum.

### What did CA do?

- The firm is alleged to have harvested data of tens of millions of Facebook users without permission in order to design software to predict and influence people's voting preferences.

### Where did it collect the data from?

- Dr Aleksandr Kogan, a psychology professor at Cambridge University developed an application, "this is your digital life", to harvest data of Facebook users.
- The app was downloaded by 270,000 people (these people granted permission for data collection), it extracted personal information of each of the users' friends without consent.
- Kogan then passed on all the data collected through his app to CA and other companies.

### What kind of data was acquired by CA?

- When the app was downloaded, Kogan had access to not only to users' basic information such as city of residence and details about friends, but also data from the profiles of their Facebook friends.

### How was the data used by the firm?

- Kogan's firm Global Science Research (GSR) offered users small amounts of money to complete a survey on the condition that they grant permission to access their personal details through Facebook.
- This helped GSR to build personality and psychological profiles of millions of people.
- The data were allegedly used by CA to tailor its political advertisements for a group of individuals, whose likings and interests were already known to them.

### How did this help Donald Trump in his presidential election campaign?

CA performed a variety of services such as:-

- Designing target audiences for digital advertisements,
- Fund-raising appeals,
- Modelling voter turnout,
- Buying \$5 million in television ads and
- Determining where Trump should travel to get maximum support.

### What are the issues?

- The first issue at stake is what consent means in the new information order.
- The conceit and attraction of the modern information order is that it does things with our consent, in our name, ostensibly to satisfy our desires.



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- But given the complexities of data-sharing, possible third-party uses, or use by friends, through whom your data can be accessed, it is not very clear what we are consenting to, and whether the terms of that consent can be enforced.
- The regulatory approach often hinges on user consent and the growth of social media companies over the past decade is fair evidence that consent is not hard to obtain, even with the knowledge of private data being signed over.
- The fact that such vast amounts of data were so easily collected in the first place—and without breaking the rules —points to the larger issues to do with the economics of the internet.

## What needs to be done?

- Regulatory action can change this to a certain extent.
- Data localization conditions can ensure that user data collected within a country must be kept within it.
- Regulations can also compel businesses to adopt privacy by design principles that foreground user choice and consent.
- The European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which takes effect from 25 May this year, has adopted this approach.
- Perhaps the most stringent data protection regime globally, it will be a litmus test for companies’ ability and willingness to comply.

## Indian context: What makes India more vulnerable?

- For millions of Indians, the discovery of internet itself happens through Facebook.
- There are over 2.2 billion users globally, out of that 250 millions of them are in India.
- While regulators in the US, China and the EU have put in place laws to address concerns around privacy and data protection, India has so far taken a piecemeal approach.

## What are the dangers abound in India?

- **Creating Psychological Profiles**
  - Data mined from Indian users of social media may be used for purposes such as targeted cross-platform advertising, but analysed in bulk, such data can provide an intimate psychological profile including ideological preferences that together help campaign managers target communications and forecast voter behavior.
- **Spread of Fake News**
  - Social Media promotes content based on engagement rather than quality thus limiting users’ access to information, which in turn leads to political polarization and the spread of fake news.

## No data protection law in India

- **Only a Whitepaper till now**
  - In 2017 the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology released a White Paper by a committee of experts led by former Supreme Court judge, Justice B.N. Srikrishna, on a data protection framework for India.
- **Current Information Technology Act, 2000 inadequate**
  - It only identifies six types of “sensitive personal data” and requires entities handling such data to have “reasonable security practices and procedures” in place before collecting the information.



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## Integrated Scheme for School Education

### Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper I, II
- ✓ Schemes and policies of the government, Education, Integrated Scheme for School Education

### Recently:

- ❖ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal of Department of School Education and Literacy to formulate an Integrated Scheme on School Education by subsuming Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) from 1st April, 2018 to 31st March, 2020.
- ❖ An estimated allocation of Rs 75,000 crore over the period has been approved which is a 20% increase over the current allocations.

### Background:

- The scheme comes in the backdrop of PM's vision of Sabko Shiksha, Achhi Shiksha and aims to support the States in universalizing access to school education from classes pre-nursery to XII across the country.

### Salient Features of the Scheme:

- The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from nursery to senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal for Education.
- The main emphasis of the Integrated Scheme is on improving quality of school education by focussing on the two T's - Teacher and Technology.

### The objectives of the Scheme, across all levels of schooling, are:

- Provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students;
- Bridging Social and Gender Gaps in School Education;
- Ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education;
- Ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions;
- Promoting vocationalization of education;
- Support States in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009; and
- Strengthening and up-gradation of State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs)/State Institutes of Education and District Institutes for Education and Training (DIET) as nodal agencies for teacher training.

### Impact:

- The Scheme gives flexibility to the States and UTs to plan and prioritize their interventions within the scheme norms and the overall resource envelope available to them.
- It will help improve the transition rates across the various levels of school education and aid in promoting universal access to children to complete school education.
- The Scheme, by providing quality education, aims to equip the children with varied skills and knowledge essential for their holistic development and prepare them for the world of work or higher education in the future.
- It would lead to an optimal utilization of budgetary allocations and effective use of human resources and institutional structures created for the erstwhile Schemes.

### Benefits:

- Holistic approach to education
- Inclusion of senior secondary levels and pre-school levels in support for School education for the first time
- An integrated administration looking at 'school' as a continuum
- 4. Focus on Quality of Education- Emphasis on improvement of Learning Outcomes
- Enhanced Capacity Building of Teachers
- Focus on strengthening Teacher Education Institutions like SCERTs and DIETs to improve the quality of teacher training



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- Enhanced use of digital technology in education through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTK channels
- Specific provision for Swachhta activities - support 'Swachh Vidyalaya'
- Improve the Quality of Infrastructure in Government Schools
- Enhanced Commitment to 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'- Upgradation of KGBVs from class VI -VIII to upto class XII
- Emphasis on 'Kaushal Vikas' in schools
- Support 'Khelo India' - provision for sports and physical equipment
- Preference to Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), LWEs, Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Border areas and the 115 aspirational districts



Figure: Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals of the UN - Education



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## Krishi Vigyan Kendras

### Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains, Agriculture Optional, geography Optional
- ✓ Schemes and policies of the government, Agriculture, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)

### Recently:

- ❖ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education for continuation / strengthening, upto 2019-20, of 669 Krishi Vigyan Kendras(KVKs) established till 31.03.2017 and 11 Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes (ATARIs)
- ❖ The financial outlay for the KVK Scheme [including Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture (DKMA)] for 2017-20 shall be of Rs 2,82,400.72 lakh.

### Purpose of KVKs:

- KVKs would act as knowledge and resource centre in the field of agriculture in the district and would build models of technology uptake and farmers' empowerment leading to support Government of India's initiative of doubling farmers' income.

### KVK Scheme:

- The KVK scheme is functioning on 100% Central funding pattern under the ambit of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE).
- Till 31.3.2017, 669 KVKs have been established, which are functioning as district level Farm Science Centres, the mandate being, Technology Assessment and Demonstration for its Application and Capacity Development.
- The activities include on-farm testing of technologies and demonstrations, capacity development of farmers and extension personnel, functioning as a knowledge and resource centre of agricultural technologies, providing farm advisories using ICT and other media means on varied subjects of interest to farmers.
- In addition, KVKs produce quality technological products (seed, planting material, bio-agents, livestock) and make it available to farmers; organize frontline extension activities; identify and document selected farm innovations; and ensure convergence with ongoing schemes and programmes.

### Various programmes initiated through the KVK Scheme are:

- A Network Project on New Extension Methodologies and Approaches; Nutri-sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI);
- Programs titled Knowledge Systems and Homestead Agriculture Management in Tribal Areas (KSHAMTA),
- Value Addition and Technology Incubation Centres in Agriculture (VATICA),
- Farm Innovation Resource Management (FIRM) and
- Establishment of Agricultural Technology Information Centre.
- Rain Water Harvesting, Integrated Farming System (IFS) Processing, Fish seed production, ICT enabled services, green agriculture and strengthening of soil health program shall also be supported.
- Two important programmes approved include the Farmer FIRST at 52 centres and Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA) for 100 Districts.
- The ARYA component is being implemented currently in 25 States through KVKs, one district from each State with technical partners from ICAR Institutes and Agricultural Universities for taking up entrepreneurial activities through skill development of rural youth leading to employment generation.

### Convergence of schemes under KVKs:

- KVK may facilitate convergence and act as the nodal agency of several schemes of the Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Food Processing Industries and other Departments and Ministries focused on agricultural and rural development through schemes like:
  - The Soil Health Card Scheme,
  - Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana,



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- Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana,
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana;
- National Gokul Mission;
- National Livestock Mission and
- Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana to address issues relating to micro irrigation,
- Integrated Nutrient Management (INM),
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM),
- Livestock Management,
- Processing and Value addition and
- Use of mobile technology etc.

## **DKMA - Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture:**

- DKMA is mandated for dissemination and sharing of agricultural knowledge and information through value added information products in print, electronic and web mode;
- Development of e-resources on agricultural knowledge; and
- Information for global exposure, facilitation for strengthening e-connectivity among institutes of the icar, agricultural universities (aus) and kvks; and
- Capacity building for agricultural knowledge management and communication.



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## Restructuring of NSDF and NSDC

### Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper II, III
- ✓ Policies and Schemes of government, Skill development, Unemployment in India

### Recently:

- ❖ The Union Cabinet has given its approval for restructuring of National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to strengthen governance, implementation and monitoring framework.
- ❖ The approval would lead to restructuring of composition of Board of NSDF and the NSDC to strengthen governance, implementation and monitoring framework.
- ❖ The restructuring will also ensure better corporate governance, transparency and accountability in operations of NSDC besides strengthening the oversight role of NSDF.

### IMA between NSDF & NSDC:

- NSDC and NSDF were set up by the Ministry of Finance and registered in July, 2008 and January, 2009 respectively for implementing coordinated action for skill development.
- NSDF's main objective is to enhance, stimulate and develop the skills of Indian youth force by various sector specific programmes.
- NSDF entered into an Investment Management Agreement (IMA) with NSDC for utilization of its corpus to meet the desired objectives of National Skill Development Mission and encourage skill development in the country.
- Provision of supervisory role of NSDF over NSDC's functions is also included in the IMA between NSDC and NSDF.

### About National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):

- The National Skill Development Corporation India (NSDC) was setup as a one of its kind, Public Private Partnership Company with the primary mandate of catalysing the skills landscape in India.
- NSDC is a unique model created with a well thought through underlying philosophy based on the following pillars:
  - Create: Proactively catalyse creation of large, quality vocational training institutions.
  - Fund: Reduce risk by providing patient capital. Including grants and equity.
  - Enable: the creation and sustainability of support systems required for skill development. This includes the Industry led Sector Skill Councils.

### The main objectives of the NSDC are to:

- Upgrade skills to international standards through significant industry involvement and develop necessary frameworks for standards, curriculum and quality assurance
- Enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives for skill development through appropriate Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models; strive for significant operational and financial involvement from the private sector
- Play the role of a "market-maker" by bringing financing, particularly in sectors where market mechanisms are ineffective or missing
- Prioritize initiatives that can have a multiplier or catalytic effect as opposed to one-off impact.

### About National Skill Development Fund (NSDF):



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- The National Skill Development Fund was set up in 2009 by the Government of India for raising funds both from Government and Non Government sectors for skill development in the country.
- The Fund is contributed by various Government sources, and other donors/ contributors to enhance, stimulate and develop the skills of Indian youth by various sector specific programs.
- A public Trust set up by the Government of India is the custodian of the Fund.
- The Trust accepts donation, contribution in cash or kind from the Contributors for furtherance of objectives of the Fund.
- The Fund meets its objectives through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) which is an industry led 'Not For Profit Company' set up for building skill development capacity and forging strong linkages with the market.
- NSDC acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies and organizations that provide skill training.
- It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.
- Till 31st March 2015, NSDF has released Rs. 2333 crore to NSDC towards skill development programmes including National Skill Certification and Monetary Reward Scheme (STAR) and UDAAN Scheme (J&K oriented).
- NSDC with 160 training partners and 1722 training centres has so far trained around 35 lakh persons across India.



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## Wetlands for a “Sustainable Urban Future” and “Disaster reduction”

### Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper III
- ✓ Environment, Science and Technology, World’s wetlands day, Ramsar Convention

### Recently:

- ❖ World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- ❖ The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands approved "Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future" as the theme for World Wetlands Day in 2018.
- ❖ Since 1997, the Ramsar Secretariat has provided outreach materials to help raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands.

### Background:

- 4 billion people, about half of the world’s population live in urban areas today.
- By 2050 that number is expected to increase as more people move into cities in search of jobs and better opportunities.
- Urbanization is one of the key defining mega-trends of our time. It’s completely transforming where and how people will live in the future.
- In fact it is estimated that the number of mega-cities with more than ten million inhabitants will jump from 31 to 41 by 2030.

### Challenges of the Urban landscapes:

- A rapidly growing urban population comes with enormous challenges for city planners and managers.
- They have to ensure that cities today can deliver not only basic services such as accommodation, transport and water, but that these cities are safe, resilient and environmentally friendly.
- Today’s current development of human settlements is a major concern for wetland conservation and wise use.
- As cities grow and demand for land increases, the tendency is to encroach on wetlands.
- They are often viewed as wasteland available to dump waste or be converted for other purposes. Take the case of the Bangalore’s lakes.
- The illegal dumping of waste mixed with mass untreated sewage in India’s Silicon Valley is creating a water crisis which threatens residents’ health – and is causing the city’s famous lakes to catch fire

### Importance of Urban Wetlands:

- Urban wetlands are essential and contribute to making cities liveable.
- During storms, urban wetlands absorb excess rainfall, which reduces flooding in cities and prevents disasters and their subsequent costs.
- The abundant vegetation found in urban wetlands, acts as a filter for domestic and industrial waste and this contributes to improving water quality.
- Urban wetlands supply cities with water and are green spaces for recreation which helps to promote human wellbeing.
- When preserved and sustainably used, urban wetlands can provide cities with multiple economic, social and cultural benefits.
- They are prize land not wasteland and therefore should be integrated into the development and management plans of cities.

### Wetlands for Disaster Reduction :

- The theme of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 2017 was Disaster Risk Reduction.
- This theme was selected to raise awareness and to highlight the vital roles of healthy wetlands in reducing the impacts of extreme events such as floods, droughts and cyclones on communities, and in helping to build resilience.
- Degradation of wetlands reduces resilience against water-related hazards.



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- Integrating wetlands as natural infrastructure alone or in conjunction with engineered structures can increase the resilience of people living along coastlines and across entire river basins.
- As natural buffers, wetlands can help reduce the impact of disasters by collecting and holding water during floods, releasing water to reduce droughts, and protecting coastal communities against storm surges.
- 90% of disasters are water related, many of them the result of extreme weather.
- It is possible to greatly reduce the impact of weather related disasters if we recognize the important role of wetlands and adopt policies and strategies that conserve and restore these important ecosystems.

## **Recommendations of the Ramsar Convention on Disaster Risk Reduction:**

- The development, humanitarian and environmental agencies should collaborate and ensure that their management frameworks and actions are coherent;
- Wetlands and the benefits they provide should be considered in disaster risk assessments and their impacts should be considered across entire river basins or coastal zones rather than just political and administrative boundaries;
- Development planning and land use changes should be considered when assessing disaster risk patterns and wetland degradation; and
- Rapid environmental assessments conducted after a disaster should consider options for wetland restoration as a contribution to wetland recovery.

## **Conclusion:**

- Recognition of the value of wetlands is essential to ensuring that the role of wetlands is reflected in global policy processes such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement on climate change.



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