

To receive Daily news juice pdf on your WhatsApp, send name and city through WhatsApp on 75979-00000.

1. PM inaugurates 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Kendra at AIIMS Deoghar

Why in news?

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today inaugurated the 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Kendra at AIIMS, Deoghar. The Prime Minister also launched the program to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras in the country from 10,000 to 25,000. On this occasion, the Prime Minister also launched the Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra.

What is the Target?

The Government had set a target to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras to 10,000 by March 2024. However, it has achieved the target of opening of 10,000 Janaushadhi Kendras prior to its target. Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech, 2023 has announced for opening of 25,000 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) across the country. Now, with a view to augment the facility and provide the reach to whole of India, 25,000 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJK's) are proposed to be opened across the Country by 31st March 2026.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana

With an objective of making quality generic medicines available at affordable prices to all, Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) was launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers. Under this scheme, there are already more than 9900+ functional Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country. The product basket of PMBJP comprises 1963 medicines and 293 surgical devices covering all major therapeutic groups.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

2. Green Credits scheme

What is the Green Credits Programme?

The Green Credits Programme, launched by the Environment Ministry in October this year, is an effort to create a market-based incentive for different kinds of environment-positive actions, not just for carbon emission reductions.

Comparison with Carbon Credits

Such a market-based system already exists for carbon, at the national as well as international level, that allows trade in carbon credits. Companies, or nations, can claim carbon credits if they take action to reduce their carbon footprint. These credits can then be traded for money. Companies unable to achieve their emission standards pay to buy these credits and improve their performance.

Green Credits programme attempts to replicate this mechanism for other environmental actions, like water conservation or soil improvements. Methodologies and standards to measure and verify such actions are still being developed. The market would also need to be developed. As a starting point, it is envisaged that private companies would buy these green credits as part of their CSR obligations.

Unlike the carbon markets, which are more focused at industry and corporations, green credit programme can benefit individuals and communities as well.

Suggestion by PM Modi

At COP28, PM Modi offered the concept to the international community, in the hope to create a market for green credits at an international level, just like the one on carbon credits exists.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Indian Express

3. Wooing Indian tourists with visa-free entry

Why in news?

Malaysia has become the latest country to extend the advantage of visa-free travel to Indian citizens. The facility will be extended to Indian travellers till December 31, 2024 and will be valid for 30 days from the date of entry. The initiative is aimed at ensuring hassle-free travel for Indians who have emerged as one of the major tourist groups visiting Malaysia in the recent past. According to industry sources, at present there are around 26 countries that extend visa-free entry to Indian citizens for various reasons.

What does the Malaysian decision imply?

Tourism has emerged as one of the key focus areas for Malaysia's post-COVID recovery strategy. Renowned for its scenic locations like the Langkawi beaches, Malaysia's tourism sector was hit hard during the COVID period when travel restrictions and visa problems nearly decimated its tourism industry. But under the Anwar Ibrahim government, Malaysia is taking serious steps to recover its leadership in the tourism sector. According to the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, 10.7 million visitors chose to visit the country in 2022 bringing in more than \$28 billion to the economy. The

recovery can be measured by the fact that during the peak COVID period of 2021, only 0.13 million tourists visited Malaysia. The visa-free facility to Indian (and Chinese) travellers is, therefore, aimed at making the country a more attractive destination for recreation seekers from two of the major Asian economies.

Which are the other countries extending visa-free travel to Indians?

Among the major regional tourism destinations, Sri Lanka and Thailand are the nearby economies that have also extended visa-free travel facility to Indians. Sri Lanka which was hit by a economic crisis in 2022 has a reason to make itself an attractive destination. Its visa-free policy for Indians is driven by both economic and political reasons.

What are the categories of visa exemption?

India has visa exemption agreements with many countries in the world that cater to multiple categories of visas. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, at least 34 countries across the world, have agreements with India that exempt visas for the holders of Indian diplomatic passports. These include Germany, France, Iran, Japan, Norway, Turkey and others. That apart there are at least 99 countries with which India has operational agreements for “diplomatic, service/official passport holders”. According to the MEA, (un-updated list), there are 16 countries that offer visa-free travel facility for a certain period of time to ordinary Indian passport holders — this includes, Nepal, Bhutan, Fiji etc. The list, however, keeps changing as countries keep on experimenting with their visa policy. According to the latest estimate available in the Passport Index website, there are at least 26 countries at present that provide visa-free facility to ordinary Indian passport holders.

Is the visa-free facility permanent?

Countries extend visa-free facility to Indian tourists for a certain amount of time or for a period depending on their advantage. But there are factors on the ground that may also determine whether a particular tourist is suitable for such facilities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: The Hindu