



Armed Forces Flag Day - 2018

- **Since 1949, 07 December** is observed as Armed Forces Flag Day throughout India to honour the martyrs as well as men and women in uniform, who valiantly fight on our borders to safeguard the country's honour. It is an important occasion to remind the nation of its obligation to look after veterans, disabled soldiers, war widows and dependents of those who have sacrificed their lives for the safety, honour and Integrity of the motherland.
- **The 'Armed forces Flag Day Fund' (AFFDF)** has been constituted by the Government of India for the welfare and rehabilitation of the Ex-Servicemen (ESM) community. There are more than 30 lakh ESM including 6.5 lakh widows and around 60,000 ESM are added every year due to early superannuation. Contributions received from prospective donors of AFFDF are utilised to provide basic sustenance needs of the ESM community through a medium of welfare schemes.

Amendments to the IBC: Implications for real estate allottees

- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016** was enacted to provide a time-bound process to resolve insolvency among companies and individuals. Insolvency is a situation where an individual or company is unable to repay their outstanding debt. Last month, the government promulgated the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 amending certain provisions of the Code. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2018, which replaces this Ordinance, was introduced in Lok Sabha last week and is scheduled to be passed in the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament. In light of this, we discuss some of the changes being proposed under the Bill and possible implications of such changes.
- **What was the need for amending the Code?** In November 2017, the Insolvency Law Committee was set up to review the Code, identify issues in its implementation, and suggest changes. The Committee submitted its report in March 2018. It made several recommendations, such as treating allottees under a real estate project as financial creditors, exempting micro, small and medium enterprises from certain provisions of the Code, reducing voting thresholds of the committee of creditors, among others. Subsequently, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, was promulgated on June 6, 2018, incorporating these recommendations.
- **What amendments have been proposed regarding real estate allottees?** The Code defines a financial creditor as anyone who has extended any kind of loan or financial credit to the debtor. The Bill clarifies that an allottee under a real estate project (a buyer of an under-construction residential or commercial property) will be considered as a financial creditor. These allottees will be represented on the committee of creditors by an authorised representative who will vote on their behalf. This committee is responsible for taking key decisions related to the resolution process, such as appointing the resolution professional, and approving the resolution plan to be submitted to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). It also implies that real estate allottees can initiate a corporate insolvency resolution process against the debtor.
- **Can the amount raised by real estate allottees be considered as financial debt?** The Insolvency Law Committee (2017) had noted that the amount paid by allottees under a real estate project is a means of raising finance for the project, and hence would classify as financial debt. It had also noted that, in certain cases, allottees provide more money towards a real estate project than banks. The Bill provides that the amount raised from allottees during the sale of a real estate project would have the commercial effect of a borrowing, and therefore be considered as a financial debt for the real estate company (or the debtor).
- **However**, it may be argued that the money raised from allottees under a real estate project is an advance payment for a future asset (or the property allotted to them). It is not an explicit loan given to the developer against receipt of interest, or similar consideration for the time value of money, and therefore may not qualify as financial debt.
- **Do the amendments affect the priority of real estate allottees in the waterfall under liquidation?** During the corporate insolvency resolution process, a committee of creditors (comprising of all financial creditors) may choose to: (i) resolve the debtor company, or (ii) liquidate (sell) the debtor's assets to repay loans. If no decision is made by the committee within the prescribed time period, the debtor's assets are liquidated to repay the debt. In case of liquidation, secured creditors are paid first after payment of the resolution fees and other resolution costs. Secured creditors are those whose loans are backed by collateral (security). This is followed by payment of employee wages, and then payment to all the unsecured creditors.
- **While the Bill classifies allottees as financial creditors**, it does not specify whether they would be treated as secured or unsecured creditors. Therefore, their position in the order of priority is not clear. What amendments have been proposed regarding Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)?

- **Earlier this year**, the Code was amended to prohibit certain persons from submitting a resolution plan. These include: (i) wilful defaulters, (ii) promoters or management of the company if it has an outstanding non-performing asset (NPA) for over a year, and (iii) disqualified directors, among others. Further, it barred the sale of property of a defaulter to such persons during liquidation. One of the concerns raised was that in case of some MSMEs, the promoter may be the only person submitting a plan to revive the company. In such cases, the defaulting firm will go into liquidation even if there could have been a viable resolution plan.
- **The Bill amends the criteria** which prohibits certain persons from submitting a resolution plan. For example, the Code prohibits a person from being a resolution applicant if his account has been identified as a NPA for more than a year. The Bill provides that this criterion will not apply if such an applicant is a financial entity, and is not a related party to the debtor (with certain exceptions). Further, if the NPA was acquired under a resolution plan under this Code, then this criterion will not apply for a period of three years (instead of one). Secondly, the Code also bars a guarantor of a defaulter from being an applicant. The Bill specifies that such a bar will apply if such guarantee has been invoked by the creditor and remains unpaid.
- **In addition to amending these criteria**, the Bill also states that the ineligibility criteria for resolution applicants regarding NPAs and guarantors will not be applicable to persons applying for resolution of MSMEs. The central government may, in public interest, modify or remove other provisions of the Code while applying them to MSMEs.
- **What are some of the other key changes being proposed?** The Bill also makes certain changes to the procedures under the Code. Under the Code, all decisions of the committee of creditors have to be taken by a 75% majority of the financial creditors. The Bill lowers this threshold to 51%. For certain key decisions, such as appointment of a resolution professional, approving the resolution plan, and making structural changes to the company, the voting threshold has been reduced from 75% to 66%.
- **The Bill also provides for withdrawal** of a resolution application, after the resolution process has been initiated with the NCLT. Such withdrawal will have to be approved by a 90% vote of the committee of creditors.

Fake news affects voting behaviour

- **Need of the hour:** Right now the only mechanism is Section 126 and EC instructions on paid news. We have to bring in a robust mechanism for conduct on social media platforms.
- **What is fake news?** Fake news is a type of yellow journalism that consists of deliberate misinformation or hoaxes spread via the traditional print, broadcasting news media, or via Internet-based social media. Fake news is written and published with the intent to mislead in order to gain financially or politically, often with sensationalist, exaggerated, or patently false headlines that grab attention.
- **The main driving force behind fake news remains:** Getting easy viewership through sensational news-e.g. dubbing foreign prisoners as spies or terrorists without any proof Directed towards a particular organization or person with an intention to either glorify it or to bring malice.eg. a news channel was established to defend the accused in Jessica Lal murder case.
- **Dangers of fake news:** Political: Swaying or polarising public opinion. Example Recent American election, UP elections where certain facts are quoted out of context/partially. Significant impact on the nature of polity. Religious: Promoting religious ideologies. Glorifying one religion while despising others Ex. Right wing violence meted out by Gau rakshaks leads to religious polarisation and communal unrests.
- **Criminal:** Sensationalising crimes by blowing them out of proportion. Misleads people rather than making them aware. Instils irrational fears. Fake news has also been used to dupe gullible people financially. The reach of news has given chit fund schemes an altogether new arena as well as has introduced the concept of online fraud through spam mails.
- **It hampers spirit of common brotherhood** and raises intolerance. Eg. 2012 mass exodus of North-Eastern people from Bangalore on false online threats. Over the time it shapes the thinking of society at large. Portrayal of India as an unsafe destination for women by international media has created a false image of a nation.
- **What is needed?** Independent, trusted and effective press regulation. Mainstream media must use social media tools intensively in order to defend the truth, present the correct information and balance opinions. Curb media ownership. We need an open debate on the impact of media concentration on our democracy and wider culture. There should be clear limits on media ownership so that powerful proprietors with vested interests are not allowed to dominate the news agenda.
- **Define fake news legally.** Heavy punitive measures for whosoever violates the said definition. There should be grievance redressal mechanisms and arbitration spaces to resolve issues. Digital media literacy among people to increase scrutiny and feedbacks of the content. Technical solutions that assess the credibility of information circulating online are also needed.
- **Beyond Fake News Project:** What is it? The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has devised a new campaign that is aimed at fighting back against disinformation and fake news. It lays a major focus on global media literacy, including workshops and debates in countries like India.

Trans fats

- **About “Heart Attack Rewind”:** “Heart Attack Rewind”, a 30-second public service announcement, will be broadcast in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on YouTube, Facebook, Hotstar, and Voot. It will also be placed on outdoor hoardings and run on radio stations in Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- **The campaign** will warn citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans-fats and offer strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives. “Heart Attack Rewind” is a follow-up to an earlier campaign called “Eat Right”, which was launched on July 11, 2018. As part of the campaign, edible oil industries took a pledge to reduce trans-fat content by 2% by 2022. Later, food companies also took a pledge to reformulate packaged foods with reduced levels of salt, sugar and saturated fat.
- **Need for awareness and significance of the campaign:** Studies have recently shown that 60,000 deaths occur every year due to cardiovascular diseases, which in turn are caused due to high consumption of trans-fats. Since the impact of trans-fats on human health is increasing exponentially, it is very important to create awareness about them. This campaign will concentrate on the demand side (consumers), who in turn, will push the supply side (food manufacturers) to come up with various strategies in order to reduce and later replace trans-fats.
- **Trans-fats:** Trans-fatty acids (TFAs) or Trans fats are the most harmful type of fats which can have much more adverse effects on our body than any other dietary constituent. These fats are largely produced artificially but a small amount also occurs naturally. Thus in our diet, these may be present as Artificial TFAs and/ or Natural TFAs.
- **Artificial TFAs** are formed when hydrogen is made to react with the oil to produce fats resembling pure ghee/butter. In our diet the major sources of artificial TFAs are the partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVO)/vanaspati/ margarine while the natural TFAs are present in meats and dairy products, though in small amounts.
- **Harmful effects:** TFAs pose a higher risk of heart disease than saturated fats. While saturated fats raise total cholesterol levels, TFAs not only raise total cholesterol levels but also reduce the good cholesterol (HDL), which helps to protect us against heart disease. Trans-fats consumption increases the risk of developing heart disease and stroke.
- **It is also associated** with a higher risk of developing obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, infertility, certain types of cancers and can also lead to compromised fetal development causing harm to the yet to be born baby.
- **Why they are increasingly being used?** TFA containing oils can be preserved longer, they give the food the desired shape and texture and can easily substitute ‘Pure ghee’. These are comparatively far lower in cost and thus add to profit/saving.
- **Permissible limit:** WHO recommends that trans-fat intake be limited to less than 1% of total energy intake and has called for the total elimination of TFAs in global food supply by 2023. FSSAI has proposed to limit TFA limit in foods to 2% and eliminate trans-fats from foods by 2022.
- **WHO recommendations:** In May 2018, WHO has released draft recommendations on limiting the intake of trans-fats. These draft recommendations, the first since 2002, are aimed at controlling non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which are responsible for an estimated 39.5 million death (72%) of the 54.7 million deaths worldwide in 2016.
- **Key recommendations:** Saturated fatty acids should not comprise more than 10% of your daily calorie intake. Trans-fatty acids should not comprise more than 1% of your daily calorie intake. Use heart-healthy polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) as replacement. The recommendations are applicable to both adults and children.
- **Initiative by Kerala:** Kerala is planning to launch an initiative to enforce dietary guidelines, involving the reduction of trans-fatty acids (TFAs), salt and sugar in commercially available foods in the State.
- **The initiative**, with technical support from the World Bank, WHO and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), is being launched as unhealthy diet is pushing up metabolic syndrome and premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among Keralites.

Global Nutrition Report (GNR)

- **Background:** The Global Nutrition Report was conceived following the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G) in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by 100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN and businesses.
- **Highlights of the report:** Global burden of malnutrition “remains unacceptably high and progress unacceptably slow”. Under-nutrition accounts for around 45% of deaths among children under five in low- and middle-income countries.

- **Overweight and obesity** has led to around 4 million deaths and 120 million healthy years of life lost across the globe, with around 38.9% adults found to be overweight. Among children under five years of age, 150.8 million are stunted, 50.5 million are wasted and 38.3 million are overweight; while 20 million babies are born underweight each year, it says.
- **The impact of malnutrition** on global economy is close to US\$3.5 trillion per year, with obesity alone costing US\$500 billion per year. A major section of the study looks at the quality, nutrient content and type of food consumed across the globe. The results suggest a disparity between developed and emerging markets, says the report. The report says that regardless of wealth, school-age children, adolescents and adults are consuming too many refined grains, sugary foods and drinks, and not enough fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- **Where India stands?** India holds almost a third (31%) of the global burden for stunting, the prevalence of which differs from state to state. As per the UNICEF, stunting, or low height for age, is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient intake and frequent infections.
- **Stunting varies greatly from district to district (12.4% to 65.1%)**, with 239 of 604 districts accounting for stunting levels above 40%. The differences between districts were a result of multiple factors, including gender, education, economic status, health, hygiene, and other demographic factors.
- **India is the country with the largest number of children** who are stunted at 46.6 million, followed by Nigeria (13.9 million) and Pakistan (10.7 million). The urban prevalence of stunting on average 19.2% compared with 26.8% in rural areas.
- **While wasting, or low weight for height**, affects a greater proportion of rural children than urban. India again tops the list with the most number of wasted children at 25.5 million, followed by Nigeria (3.4 million) and Indonesia (3.3 million). India is also among the countries with more than a million children who are overweight. As part of the report, a case study in Rajasthan found that key areas of infant and young child feeding and micronutrient supplementation were underfunded.
- **Way ahead-** need of the hour- suggestions by the report: Break down silos between malnutrition in all its forms. Prioritise and invest in the data needed and capacity to use it. Scale up financing for nutrition – diversify and innovate to build on past progress.
- **Galvanise action on healthy diets** – engage across countries to address this universal problem. Make and deliver better commitments to end malnutrition in all its forms – an ambitious, transformative approach will be required to meet global nutrition targets.

India's 9-point agenda against fugitive economic offenders

- **What to study?** Static Part: About G20, Meaning of fugitive economic offender. Dynamic and Current: The proposed action plan- need, significance, challenges and the need for international collaboration. Context: India has presented a nine-point programme to take action against fugitive economic offenders at the ongoing G20 Summit in Argentina.
- **The agenda includes:** Strong and active" cooperation among the G-20 nations. The document highlights the importance of cooperation in legal processes such as "effective freezing of the proceeds of crime; early return of the offenders and efficient repatriation of the proceeds of crime should be enhanced and streamlined". Joint efforts to be made by the G20 nations to form a mechanism that denies entry and safe havens to all fugitive economic offenders.
- **There is need for the "effective" implementation of the principles of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNOTC).** The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) should be called upon "to assign priority and to focus on establishing international co-operation that leads to a timely and comprehensive exchange of information between the competent authorities".
- **The FATF should be tasked to formulate a standard definition of fugitive economic offenders.** The FATF should also develop a set of commonly agreed and standardised procedures related to identification, extradition and judicial proceedings for dealing with fugitive economic offenders to provide guidance and assistance to G-20 countries, subject to their domestic law".
- **There is need for setting up of a common platform** "for sharing experiences and best practices including successful cases of extradition, gaps in existing systems of extradition and legal assistance." The G20 forum should consider initiating work on locating properties of economic offenders who have a tax debt in the country of their residence for its recovery.
- **Background:** The programme for curbing the menace of fugitive economic offenders comes amid heightened efforts by India to apprehend a number of such offenders, including Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

Polavaram multi-purpose project

- **What's the issue?** The Polavaram project was accorded national status in 2014 in the Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation Act and its design was changed. The petitioner had told the court that since the dam design has been changed and new components were added, it'd require a new environmental clearance.
- **About the Polavaram project:** Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project. The dam across the Godavari River is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.
- **The project** is multipurpose major terminal reservoir project on river Godavari for development of Irrigation, Hydropower and drinking water facilities to East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, West Godavari and Krishna districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- **The project** is likely to displace over 1.88 lakh people across 222 villages and so far, 1,730 persons in six villages have been rehabilitated by the government.

Swachhta Pakhwada

- **As a part of the Swachhta Pakhwada of Ministry of Civil Aviation (2018)**, the 15 day cleanliness drive, has successfully been observed in M/o Civil Aviation and all of its organization.
- **Swachhta Pakhwada:** Started in April 2016. The objective is to bring a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhta by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions. An annual calendar is pre-circulated among the Ministries to help them plan for the Pakhwada activities.
- **The Ministries observing Swachhata Pakhwada** are monitored closely using online monitoring system of Swachhata Samiksha where action plans, images, videos related to Swachhata activities are uploaded and shared.



National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act

- **Background:** On 16 October 2015, in a 4-1 majority verdict, the Supreme Court held that both the Constitution (Ninety-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014, and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014, were unconstitutional as it would undermine the independence of the judiciary.
- **The majority said the two laws** affect the independence of the judiciary, and judicial appointments, among other things, should be protected from executive control.
- **About NJAC and the Act:** NJAC is a body responsible for the appointment and transfer of judges to the higher judiciary in India. JAC Bill sought to replace the collegium system of appointing the judges of Supreme Court and 24 High Courts with judicial appointments commission wherein the executive will have a say in appointing the judges.
- **A new article, Article 124A,** (which provides for the composition of the NJAC) was to be inserted into the Constitution. The Bill provided for the procedure to be followed by the NJAC for recommending persons for appointment as Chief Justice of India and other Judges of the Supreme Court (SC), and Chief Justice and other Judges of High Courts (HC).
- **According to the bill** the commission will consist of the following members: Chief Justice of India (Chairperson, ex officio) Two other senior judges of the Supreme Court next to the Chief Justice of India – ex officio The Union Minister of Law and Justice, ex-officio
- **Two eminent persons** (to be nominated by a committee consisting of the Chief Justice of India, Prime Minister of India and the Leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha or where there is no such Leader of Opposition, then, the Leader of single largest Opposition Party in Lok Sabha), provided that of the two eminent persons, one person would be from the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes or OBC or minority communities or a woman. The eminent persons shall be nominated for a period of three years and shall not be eligible for re-nomination.

Guidelines for crèches at workplaces

- **The guidelines** are not mandatory but are a yardstick for NGOs and organisations for setting up of creches.
- **Legal provisions:** In March this year, Parliament passed the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017, enhancing paid maternity leave from a period of 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The law is applicable to all institutions with 10 or more employees. It also makes it mandatory for every organisation with 50 or more employees to have a crèche.
- **The new guidelines include:** A crèche be either at the workplace or within 500 metres of it. Alternatively, it could also be in the beneficiaries' neighbourhood. The facility should be open for eight to 10 hours and if the employees have a shift system, then the crèche should also be run accordingly. A crèche must have a minimum space of 10 to 12 square feet per child to ensure that she or he can play, rest and learn. There should be no unsafe places such as open drains, pits, garbage bins near the centre.
- **The crèches** should have at least one guard, who should have undergone police verification. There should also be at least one supervisor per crèche and a trained worker for every 10 children under three years of age or for every 20 children above the age of three, along with a helper. No outsiders such as plumbers, drivers, electricians be allowed inside the crèche when children are present.
- **A crèche monitoring committee** with representations from among crèche workers, parents and administration should be formed. There should also be a grievance redressal committee for inquiring into instances of sexual abuse.
- **The Maternity Benefit Act:** The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, applies to establishments employing 10 or more than 10 persons in factories, mines, plantation, shops & establishments and other entities. The main purpose of this Act is to regulate the employment of women in certain establishments for certain period before and after child birth and to provide maternity benefit and certain other benefits. The Act was amended through the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017.

- **The amendment has brought in major changes to the law relating to maternity benefits. These are:** It extends the period of maternity benefit from 12 weeks to 26 weeks of which not more than eight weeks can precede the date of the expected delivery. This exceeds the International Labour Organisation's minimum standard of 14 weeks and is a positive development. However, a woman who has two or more surviving children will be entitled to 12 weeks of which not more than six weeks can precede the date of the expected delivery.
- **Women who legally** adopt a child below the age of three months or a "commissioning mother" will be entitled to maternity benefit for 12 weeks from the date on which the child is handed over to her. A commissioning mother is defined as a biological mother who uses her egg to create an embryo implanted in another woman.
- **It gives discretion** to employers to allow women to work from home after the period of maternity benefit on mutually agreeable conditions. It introduces a provision which requires every establishment to intimate a woman at the time of her appointment of the maternity benefits available to her.

Right to know

- **Aim:** To smoothen access to information. To help curb the rising number of pending appeals with the Maharashtra State Information Commission. To oversee denying or withholding information.
- **About the RTI Act:** The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.
- **Under the provisions of the Act,** any citizen of India may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or "instrumentality of State") which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days.
- **The Act** also requires every public authority to computerise their records for wide dissemination so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.
- **Information disclosure in India** is restricted by the Official Secrets Act 1923 and various other special laws.

Mekedatu dam project

- **About Mekedatu dam project:** Being set up by the Karnataka government, the project is near Mekedatu, in Ramanagaram district, across the river Cauvery from Tamil Nadu. Its primary objective is to supply drinking water to Bengaluru and recharge the groundwater table in the region.
- **About the conflict:** Tamil Nadu has moved the Supreme Court. Its main argument is that the project violates the final award of the Cauvery River Water Tribunal, and that the "construction of the two reservoirs would result in impounding of the flows in the intermediate catchment below the Krishnaraja Sagar and Kabini reservoirs, and Billigundulu in the common border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu".
- **Karnataka says,** the project will not come in the way of releasing the stipulated quantum of water to Tamil Nadu, nor will it be used for irrigation purposes.
- **Know about CWC:** It is a premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
- **The Commission** is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development.
- **Central Water Commission CWC** is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.

Kimberley Process

- **India is founding member of KPCS.** What is the Kimberley Process? The Kimberley Process is an international certification scheme that regulates trade in rough diamonds. It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds, while helping to protect legitimate trade in rough diamonds.
- **The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** outlines the rules that govern the trade in rough diamonds.
- **The KP is not, strictly speaking,** an international organisation: it has no permanent offices or permanent staff. It relies on the contributions – under the principle of 'burden-sharing' – of participants, supported by industry and civil society observers. Neither can the KP be considered as an international agreement from a legal perspective, as it is implemented through the national legislations of its participants.
- **What are Conflict diamonds?** "Conflict Diamonds" means rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments. It is also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.
- **Who is involved?** The Kimberley Process (KP) is open to all countries that are willing and able to implement its requirements. The KP has 54 participants, representing 81 countries, with the European Union and its Member States counting as a single participant. KP members account for approximately 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds. In addition, the World Diamond Council, representing the international diamond industry, and civil society organisations, such as Partnership-Africa Canada, participate in the KP and have played a major role since its outset.
- **How does the Kimberley Process work?** The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) imposes extensive requirements on its members to enable them to certify shipments of rough diamonds as 'conflict-free' and prevent conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate trade.
- **Under the terms of the KPCS,** participating states must put in place national legislation and institutions; export, import and internal controls; and also commit to transparency and the exchange of statistical data.
- **Participants can only legally** trade with other participants who have also met the minimum requirements of the scheme, and international shipments of rough diamonds must be accompanied by a KP certificate guaranteeing that they are conflict-free.

Nasa's Osiris-Rex

- **Background:** The launch of the NASA OSIRIS-REx mission took place on September 8, 2016. Since then, the spacecraft has been two years travelling through space to reach its target, primitive asteroid Bennu, in October, 2018.
- **About the mission:** OSIRIS-Rex stands for Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer. OSIRIS-REx is the third mission in NASA's New Frontiers program, which previously sent the New Horizons spacecraft zooming by Pluto and the Juno spacecraft into orbit around Jupiter.
- **Scientific Mission Goals:** OSIRIS-REx will be conducting a range of scientific experiments in order to better understand the asteroid. The aim of the mission is to collect a sample of regolith- the loose, soil-like material which covers the surface of the asteroid.
- **In July 2020,** the probe will move to within a few metres of Bennu, extending its robotic arm to touch the asteroid's surface. The arm will make contact with the surface for just 5 seconds, during which a blast of nitrogen gas will be used to stir up the regolith, allowing it to be sucked into the sample collector.
- **OSIRIS-REx** has enough nitrogen on board for 3 sample collection attempts, and NASA are hoping to collect between 60 and 2000g of regolith material to bring back to Earth.
- **Why was Bennu chosen?** Proximity to Earth: In order for OSIRIS-REx to reach its destination in a reasonable timeframe, NASA needed to find an asteroid which had a similar orbit to Earth. Around 7000 asteroids are 'Near-Earth Objects' (NEOs). Out of these, just under 200 have orbits similar to Earth, with Bennu being one of these.
- **Size: Small asteroids,** those less than 200m in diameter, typically spin much faster than larger asteroids, meaning the regolith material can be ejected into space. Bennu is around 500m in diameter, so rotates slowly enough to ensure that the regolith stays on its surface.
- **Composition:** Bennu is a primitive asteroid, meaning it hasn't significantly changed since the beginning of the Solar System (over 4 billion years ago). It is also very carbon-rich, meaning it may contain organic molecules, which could have been precursors to life on Earth.
- **Additionally,** Bennu is a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA). Every 6 years, Bennu's orbit brings it within 200,000 miles of the Earth, which means it has a high probability of impacting Earth in the late 22nd Century.

Hornbill Festival

- **The Union Home Minister** inaugurated the hugely popular Hornbill Festival 2018 in Kohima, coinciding with the Formation Day of Nagaland.
- **Hornbill Festival** offers unique opportunity for states to interact and exhibit their cultural heritage in the true spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat".
- **Significance of Nagaland Geographically:** Nagaland is geographically located at the vantage point. It is the gateway to the South-East Asia. North-East is the pivot of our Government's 'Act East' Policy. Hornbill Festival:
- **Nagas celebrate** this festival to revive, protect, sustain and promote the richness of the Naga heritage and traditions. It occurs during 1 – 10 December on an annual basis. It is also called the "Festival of Festivals".
- **The festival** pays tribute to Hornbill, the most admired and revered bird for the Nagas for its qualities of alertness and grandeur. It is organized by State Tourism and Art & Culture Departments and also supported by Union Government.
- **Hornbill Festival** was established on 1st December 1963 and was inaugurated by the then President Dr. S Radhakrishnan.

Digital Sky Platform

- **Digital Sky Platform launched** – India to start registration of drones, pilots, and operators Registration portal for online permission.
- **In August 2018**, India had announced the release of its Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) to enable safe flying of RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems) in India.
- **Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS)**, also known as drones, are a technology platform with wide-ranging applications.
- **Digital Sky Platform:** New features will be developed to ease the process of flying for users. To provide oversight to security agencies. It is envisioned that in the future Digital Sky Service Providers (DSPs) will be extending the functionality of the platform through Application Program Interfaces (APIs).
- **Permissions to fly in different zones:** To get permissions, RPAS operators or remote pilots will have to file a flight plan.
- **Green zones** – Flying in the green zones, requires only intimation of the time and location via the portal or the app. Yellow zones – Permission will be required for flying in yellow zones. Red zones – Flights will not be allowed to fly.
- **If an RPAS** does not have permission to fly, it will not be allowed to take-off under the policy of No-Permission-No-Takeoff (NPNT).

India to host G20 summit in 2022:

- **Context:** India will host the G20 Summit In 2022, when the country celebrates its 75th year of Independence. It will be the first meet of the global grouping in India.
- **Founded in 1999**, the G20 brings together 19 of the world's most industrialised nations and the European Union. Annual meetings of its country's leaders have been taking place since 2008.
- **G-20 members** comprise Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US.

CIMON, the 1st Robot with Artificial Intelligence to Fly in Space:

- **CIMON is a small robot** endowed with artificial intelligence (AI) launched on a two-day trip to the International Space Station aboard SpaceX's Dragon cargo capsule.
- **About CIMON:** CIMON was developed by the European aerospace company Airbus on behalf of the German space agency. The robot's AI is IBM's famous Watson system.
- **CIMON is roughly spherical** and weighs 11 lbs. (5 kilograms). The robot can converse with people, and it knows whom it's talking to thanks to facial-recognition software.

Anti-ship cruise missile BrahMos:

- **The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** meeting chaired by defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman gave approval for the procurement of BrahMos Missiles for two of the vessels to be built in Russia.
- **About BrahMos:** The BrahMos is the fastest cruise missile of its class in the world. BrahMos missile flies almost three times the speed of sound at Mach 2.8 and has a range of 290 km.
- **The missile** has been jointly developed with Russia and is named after the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva in Russia.
- **The BrahMos** is extremely difficult to be intercepted by surface to air missiles deployed on leading warships around the world.
- **The range of the BrahMos** missile can be extended up to 400 km as certain technical restrictions were lifted after India became a full member of the Missile Technology Control Regime or MTCR in 2016.



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National Academy of letters

- **The proposal to establish a National Academy of letters** in India had been under the consideration of the British Government of the country long before independence. In 1944, the Government of India accepted in principle a proposal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal that a National Cultural trust should be set up to encourage cultural activities in all fields. The trust was to consist of three Academies, including the Academy of letters. After freedom, the proposal was pursued by the independent Government of India, while convened a series of conference to work out the details. Consensus emerged in favour of establishing three National Academies one of letters, another of visual arts and the third of dance, drama and music. But deference of opinion persisted whether the Government should take the initiative and establish the Academies or whether it should wait for the advent of individuals who had the necessary moral authority to establish the Academies.
- **Abul Kalam Azad** the union minister of education, was of the opinion that "if we had waited for the Academy to grow up from below, we might have had to wait till the Greek Kalends". It was felt that there was no alternative to Government taking the initiative to set up the Academies. The Government's functioning in the process was to be that of a curtain raiser. The Government would set up the Academies, but once they were establish, it would refrain from exercising any control and leave them to perform their function as autonomous institution. The Government of India decided to establish a National Academy of letters to be called Sahitya Akademi by its resolution No F-6-4/51G2(A) dated December 1952.
- **The Sahitya Akademi was formally** inaugurated by the Government of India on 12 March 1954. The Government of India Resolution, which set forth the constitution of the Akademi, described it as a national organisation to work actively for the development of Indian letters and to set high literary standards, to foster and co-ordinate literary activities in all the Indian languages and to promote through them all the cultural unity of the country. Though set up by the Government, the Akademi functions as an autonomous organisation. It was registered as a society on 7 January 1956, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- **Sahitya Akademi**, India's National Academy of Letters, is the central institution for literary dialogue, publication and promotion in the country and the only institution that undertakes literary activities in 24 Indian languages, including English. Over the 64 years of its dynamic existence, it has ceaselessly endeavored to promote good taste and healthy reading habits, to keep alive the intimate dialogue among the various linguistic and literary zones and groups through seminars, lectures, symposia, discussions, readings and performances, to increase the pace of mutual translations through workshops and individual assignments and to develop a serious literary culture through the publications of journals, monographs, individual creative works of every genre, anthologies, encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies, who's who of writers and histories of literature.
- **It has so far brought out over 6000 books**, the present pace of publication being one book every 19 hours. Every year the Akademi holds at least 50 seminars at regional, national and international levels along with the workshops and literary gatherings-about 300 in number per year, under various heads like Meet the Author, Samvad, Kavisandhi, Kathasandhi, Loka: The Many Voices, People and Books, Through My Window, Mulakat, Asmita, Antaral, Avishkar, Nari Chetna, Yuva Sahiti, Bal Sahiti, Purvottari and Literary Forum meetings.
- **Akademi gives 24 awards annually to literary works** in the languages it has recognized and an equal number of awards to literary translations from and into the languages of India, both after a year long process of scrutiny, discussion and selection. It also gives special awards called Bhasha Samman to significant contribution to the languages not formally recognized by the Akademi as also for contribution to classical and medieval literature.
- **It has also system of electing eminent writers** as Fellows and Honorary Fellows and has also established fellowship in the names of Dr. Anand Coomaraswamy and Premchand. The Akademi has launched Centres for Translation in Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Delhi, and an Archive of Indian Literature in Delhi. A project office for the promotion of Tribal and Oral literature has also been set up in the North Eastern Hill University Campus, Shillong. Many more imaginative projects are on the anvil. Sahitya Akademi is aware of cultural and linguistic differences and does not believe in forced standardization of culture through a bulldozing of levels and attitudes.
- **At the same time**, it is also conscious of the deep inner culture, spiritual, historical and experimental links that unify India's diverse manifestations of literature. This unity seeks an international species-dimension through the Akademi's Culture Exchange Programmes with other counties on the globe.
- **Languages Recognised:** Besides the 22 languages enumerated in the Constitution of India, the Sahitya Akademi has recognised English and Rajasthani as languages in which its programme may be implemented. Names of present members of various language Advisory Boards, which have been constituted to render advice for implementing literary programmes in these 24 languages are given in the website
- **Head Office:** The Head Office of the Sahitya Akademi is housed in Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi. This elegant building was constructed in 1961 to commemorate the birth centenary of Raindranath Tagore, and houses all the three National Akademies, namely, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Lalit Kala Akademi and the Sahitya Akademi.

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya

- **A nucleus of a 'National Museum of Man'** began functioning from New Delhi from 21st March, 1977 as part of the Anthropological Survey of India. In 1978 it was separated from the Anthropological Survey of India and declared as an Independent Subordinate Office of the Department of Culture (now Ministry of Culture), GOI. In March 1985 the Museum was renamed as Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, at the instance of the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, which was later (1993) through a Cabinet decision named after Indira Gandhi as Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya. For international perspective the term 'National Museum of Mankind' was adopted. Unlike other national Museums, which were set up to house certain collections in possession, the IGRMS was started without any collection to display, rather with a set of ideas. Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya acts as a facilitator for forging interrelation between Community and Museums.
- **To present an integrated story** of the Evolution of man and culture with special reference to India; To highlight the richness and diversity of Cultural patterns in India and its underlying unity; To promote national integration; To organize indoor and outdoor Exhibitions on :
- **Human Evolution and Human Variation**; Culture and Society in Pre and proto historic times; and Patterns of culture; To take steps to salvage and preserve the fast vanishing aspect of the Indian Culture;
- **To promote and conduct research** in the related subjects and provide funds and enter into arrangements with other similar institutions for the purpose of furtherance of the objectives of the Samiti;
- **To act as a centre of research** and training in museology of the appropriate kind and generate in the course of time a new museum movement in the different regions of India to present and preserve variety of cultural life; and
- **To undertake all such activities** as and when considered necessary for the achievement of the said objectives.

National Commission for Women to support livelihood programmes in Northeast

- **National Commission for Women (NCW)** will support Northeast livelihood programmes for women, particularly for those in younger age group, through Skill development and Specialized training, which can enable them to earn their living and also empower them as individuals. This was discussed at a meeting between Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh and the newly appointed member of the three-member National Commission for Women, Smt Soso Shaiza, who called on the Minister here today.
- **During the meeting**, it was observed that even though the women in Northeast, by and large, are quite emancipated as far as their contribution in outdoor work is concerned, but there was a huge scope for raising the levels of education among the women living in remote and rural areas, and also to impart skill training to make them self - reliant.
- **Dr Jitendra Singh** said that the National Commission for Women can supplement its efforts and resources in carrying forward several of the women oriented projects which are already undertaken by the Ministry of Development of North-eastern Region and the NEC. In this regard, he made a special mention of a number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) of women doing a commendable work in the region.

EX SHINYUU Maitri-2018 With JASDF Commences

- **The Japanese Air Self Defence Force (JASDF)** is in India for a bilateral air exercise SHINYUU Maitri-18 with Indian Air Force from 03-07 Dec 18 at A F Station Agra. The theme of the exercise is joint Mobility/Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) on Transport aircraft. The JASDF C2 aircraft along with aircrew/observers are part of this first air exercise between the two Air Forces. IAF is participating with An-32 and C-17 aircraft with aircrew & observers. The focus of the exercise is set for the IAF and JASDF crews to undertake Joint Mobility/ HADR operations. Display of heavy loading/ off loading are also planned to be practiced during this exercise.

National Archives of India

- **The genesis of the National Archives of India** may be traced back to the year 1860 when Sandeman, the Civil Auditor, in his report stressed the need of relieving the offices of congestion by destruction of the papers of routine nature and transfer of all valuable records to a 'Grand Central Archive'. However, things took a concrete shape in 1889, when Professor G.W. Forrest of Elphinstone College, Bombay was entrusted the job of examining the records of the Foreign Department of the Government of India. Earlier, he had earned reputation as an Archivist for his work in the Bombay Records Office. In his report, he made a strong plea for transferring all records of the administration of East India Company to a Central Repository. As a result, Imperial Records Department (IRD) came into existence on 11 March 1891 which was located in Imperial Secretariat Building at Calcutta (Kolkata). Professor G.W. Forrest was made its Officer in Charge. His main task was to examine, transfer, arrange and catalogue records of all the Departments and to organise a Central Library in place of various Departmental Libraries. After G.W. Forrest, the work at Imperial Records Department (IRD) progressed well under S.C. Hill (1900), C.R. Wilson (1902), N.L. Hallward (1904), E. Denison Ross (1905), A.F. Scholfield (1915), R.A. Blaker (1919), J.M. Mitra (1920) and Rai Bahadur A.F.M. Abdul Ali (1922-1938) who were scholars as well as Records Keepers in their own right.
- **Subsequent to the transfer from Calcutta** (Kolkata) to New Delhi in 1911, the Imperial Records Department (IRD) shifted to the present building in 1926. After independence, the IRD was rechristened as the National Archives of India and the Head of the Organisation was designated as Director of Archives from Keeper of Records. Dr. S.N. Sen, who succeeded A.F.M. Abdul Ali and held office till 1949, gave an overall orientation to the activities of Imperial/ Records Department/ National Archives of India. For the first time, records were thrown open for bonafide research in 1939 and by 1947 all pre 1902 records were available for consultation. A Conservation Research Laboratory (CRL) was established in 1940 to conduct research into problems relating to conservation which was Dr Sen's visionary contribution. Training in Archives Keeping was introduced in 1941 and in 1944, a scheme of Post War Re-organisation of Archives offices in India was laid down by the Indian Historical Records Commission. In 1947, the Departmental Journal, The Indian Archives came into existence; which contained research papers on source material of modern Indian history, conservation of documents, records-management, reprographics, archival awareness and all other allied aspects of functional archives.
- **Thus, the National Archives of India** marched towards the path of progress after independence to play a more dynamic and inspiring role in the archival field of the entire country. It has witnessed manifold expansion of its activities since then in the field of accession of public records, acquisition of private papers/ collections and library material, records management, research and reference, publication, training, conservation, reprography, digitalization outreach programmes, coordination at national and international level and expansion of office at regional level. The Department witnessed further impetus to its status in June 1990 when the office of the Director of Archives was re designated as Director General of Archives. At present National Archives of India is an attached office under the Ministry of Culture and has a Regional Office at Bhopal and three Records Centres at Jaipur, Puducherry and Bhubaneswar.



Northeast to focus on bamboo industry: Dr Jitendra Singh

- **Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)**, MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said that with the assistance of Centre, Northeast will focus on bamboo industry in a big way, since this is a sector which has not received the deserved attention inspite of the fact that over 60% of India's bamboo is grown in this region. Addressing the meeting of "NITI Aayog Forum for Northeast" in Guwahati, Dr. Jitender singh said that under the directions of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi the home grown bamboo has been exempted from the Forest Act.
- **During the meeting**, Dr Jitendra Singh disclosed that the Modi Government has set up new National Bamboo Mission (NBM) to focus on this sector. The North Eastern Council Cane & Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC) will act as a coordinating and facilitating agency for the North Eastern region, he added.
- **Out of a total outlay** of Rs.1,290 crore till March 2020, Dr Jitendra Singh said, Rs.150 cr to Rs.200 Crore has been allocated for the North Eastern region for the year 2018-19. He said that the priority should be the marketing of high value products like bamboo shoots, candy, bamboo charcoal fiber in fashion Industry, etc. In addition, big industries dealing in fiber, construction material, bamboo engineered wood, etc. are the potential areas which can be envisaged for further expansion, he said.
- **Under the four and a half years** rule of the Modi Government, Dr Jitendra Singh said, there has been a visible and consistent effort to develop the North Eastern region and bring it at par with the other regions of the country. This transformation has been mainly possible because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal interest and high priority to the region, he said. And now, the whole country is witnessing and appreciating the revolutionary fast-track change in a short span of time, the Minister said.
- **Dr Jitendra Singh** also referred to the growth achieved in the Tourism sector and said that in the last two years, some of the destinations like Gangtok and Shillong received such a heavy tourist rush that there was no accommodation available. He said, the most significant marker of this change is the fact that now even the private tour operators from South Indian cities like Bengaluru are planning exclusive tourist itineraries for Northeast.
- **Dr Jitendra Singh also referred** to the prioritization of the "Tea Sector", considering the fact that more than 850 Tea Estates and 2500 Tea Gardens are located in the State of Assam alone. He also referred to plans and efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in "Fish production" considering that 95% of the region's population consumes fish.

Swadesh Darshan Project

- **The first ever Swadesh Darshan Project** in the state of Nagaland to be inaugurated tomorrow
- **"Development of Tribal Circuit: Peren-Kohima-Wokha Project"** will be inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Shri Neiphiu Rio, in the presence of Union Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism, Shri K.J. Alphons and Advisor for Tourism, Art & Culture, Government of Nagaland, Shri H. Khehovi Yephthomi at Kisama Heritage Village in Nagaland tomorrow. This is the first project to be implemented in the state under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
- **The project "Development of Tribal Circuit: Peren-Kohima-Wokha"** was sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism in November 2015 for Rs. 97.36 Crores. Under the project the Ministry has developed facilities like Tribal Tourist Village, Eco Log Huts, Open Air Theatre, Tribal Rejuvenation Centre, Cafeteria, Helipad, Tourist Interpretation Centre, Wayside Amenities, Last Mile Connectivity, Public Conveniences, Multipurpose Hall, Nature Trails, Trekking Routes etc.
- **In addition to the above project**, the Ministry has sanctioned another project in Nagaland "Development of Tribal circuit: Mokokchung-Tuensang-Mon" for Rs.99.67 crore. The implementation of the project is in progress.
- **Swadesh Darshan scheme is one among the flagship schemes** of the Ministry of Tourism for development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritised manner. Under this scheme the Government is focussing on development of quality infrastructure in the country with objective of providing better experience and facilities to the visitors on one hand and on other hand fostering the economic growth. The scheme was launched in 2014 -15 and as on date the Ministry has sanctioned 73 projects worth projects for Rs. 5873.26 Crore to 30 States and UTs. 30 projects / major components of these projects are expected to be completed this year. 8 projects have been inaugurated as on date under the scheme.

World Customs Organization

- **About WCO:** The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- **As the global centre of Customs expertise**, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community. The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.
- **Roles and functions:** As a forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences between national Customs delegates, the WCO offers its Members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services.
- **Besides the vital role** played by the WCO in stimulating the growth of legitimate international trade, its efforts to combat fraudulent activities are also recognized internationally.
- **WCO has also been responsible** for administering the World Trade Organization's Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

- **What's the issue?** The decision to pull out after more than five decades comes at a turbulent time in Gulf politics, with Doha under a boycott by former neighbouring allies including Saudi Arabia for 18 months.
- **Since June 2017**, OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia — along with three other Arab states — has cut trade and transport ties with Qatar, accusing the country of supporting terrorism and its regional rival Iran. Qatar denies the claims, saying the boycott hampers its national sovereignty.
- **Background:** Qatar's oil production is around 600,000 barrels per day, making it the world's 17th largest producer of crude. It also only holds around two percent of the world's global oil reserves.
- **About OPEC:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of oil-producing nations that was first established in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1961. OPEC is one of the most powerful international organizations in the world and was a major player in the shift towards state control over natural resources.
- **Membership:** The OPEC Statute distinguishes between the Founder Members and Full Members – those countries whose applications for membership have been accepted by the Conference.
- **The Statute** stipulates that “any country with a substantial net export of crude petroleum, which has fundamentally similar interests to those of Member Countries, may become a Full Member of the Organization, if accepted by a majority of three-fourths of Full Members, including the concurring votes of all Founder Members.”
- **The Statute further** provides for Associate Members which are those countries that do not qualify for full membership, but are nevertheless admitted under such special conditions as may be prescribed by the Conference.
- **Currently, the Organization** has a total of 15 Member Countries. The current OPEC members are the following: Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.
- **Indonesians a former member**, and Qatar will no longer be the member of OPEC starting on 1 January 2019.

Soyuz

- **Soyuz- key facts:** The Soyuz (SAW-yooz) is a Russian spacecraft. Astronauts and cosmonauts travel to the International Space Station on the Soyuz. The Soyuz transports crews to the International Space Station and returns them to Earth after their missions.
- **The Soyuz is like a lifeboat** for the space station. At least one Soyuz is always docked at the space station. If there is an emergency, the station crew can use the Soyuz to return to Earth.
- **The Soyuz** is the only means of reaching the ISS since the U.S. retired the space shuttle in 2011.
- **What is the International Space Station?** The International Space Station is a large spacecraft in orbit around Earth. It serves as a home where crews of astronauts and cosmonauts live. The space station is also a unique science laboratory. It orbits Earth at an average altitude of approximately 250 miles. It travels at 17,500 mph. This means it orbits Earth every 90 minutes. NASA is using the space station to learn more about living and working in space. These lessons will make it possible to send humans farther into space than ever before. The ISS programme is a joint project among five participating space agencies: NASA, Roscosmos, JAXA, ESA, and CSA.
- **The ownership** and use of the space station is established by intergovernmental treaties and agreements. The station is divided into two sections, the Russian Orbital Segment (ROS) and the United States Orbital Segment (USOS), which is shared by many nations.

Floating solar plant

- **Floating solar plants- significance:** Floating solar plants are considered an alternate option to tackle land availability issues. The concept involves setting up solar panels on floats placed on dams, lakes and similar water bodies.
- **Floating solar makes** intuitive sense in geographies with high land costs and poor availability. Floating solar is a definite reprieve for states that are a significant market for more renewable energy but with little land to spare, as is the case with Uttar Pradesh.
- **The global floating solar market** is driven by Asian countries, with China and Japan being home to bulk of the existing operational capacity of 259 MW.
- **Challenges:** In India, floating solar is likely to face challenges scaling up to the level of ground-mounted plants.
- **Cost:** Despite being land neutral, the cost of the floating systems including anchoring, installation, maintenance and transmission renders the overall cost of the floating solar systems are much higher than the land based systems at this initial stage of development.
- **Technical issues:** Besides the two major issues of corrosion and instability, other issues like the long term impact of moist environment on modules, cables, safe transmission of power through the floats to the nearest feeder point, the environmental impact on the water body and the marine life etc needs to be addressed and – make the system cost effective.
- **What ails floating solar?** Non-availability of floats in India makes it an expensive option. Project costs higher by 30%-50% than ground mounted solar. Dependent on European or Chinese suppliers.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The largest floating solar plant to date is a 2MW one in Vishakhapatnam. Another is a 500-kWh plant built by the Kerala State Electricity Board at the Banasura Sagar Dam.

Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee

- **About Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and his roles:** The PCCoSC is envisaged as a single-point military adviser to the government. PCCoSC will be a four-star officer, who will be equivalent to chiefs of army, airforce and navy.
- **PCCoSC is necessary for the following reasons:** For better coordination and co-operative practices among the three services. To provide single point military advice to government. Streamline long-term defence planning and procurement purpose.
- **Roles and functions:** He would look into joint issues of the services like training of troops, acquisition of weapon systems and joint operations of the services. The officer would also be in-charge of the tri-services command at Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the strategic command of nuclear weapons along with the upcoming cyber and space command.

- **Background:** A GoM in its report, submitted to the government in February 2001, recommended the creation of such an institution. The Naresh Chandra Task Force, formed in May 2011 to review the national security management system, recommended the creation of permanent post of chairman, chiefs of staff committee (CoSC).

Indian Pavillion at COP-24.

- **The Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan** participated in the inauguration of Indian Pavilion at the 24th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP-24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held at Katowice, Poland.
- **Theme of India Pavilion** – “One World One Sun One Grid”.
- **Minister’s Statement:** The Ministry has launched a nationwide campaign in preserving and protecting the environment called the Green Good Deeds Movement. This campaign was prepared to inspire, encourage and involve each and every individual of the society to realize people’s participation in accomplishing the goals.
- **India’s leadership** in global climate action has been recognized and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been bestowed with “Champion of Earth Award” this year by the United Nations in promoting International Solar Alliance and resolve to make India plastic free by 2022.

What is the ‘Champions of the Earth award’?

- **It was launched in 2005.** “Champions of the Earth”, the UN’s highest environmental honour, celebrates outstanding figures from the public and private sectors and from civil society whose actions have had a transformative positive impact on the environment.
- **In 2018, the award** was received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron for their leadership in promotion of solar energy.
- **What is COP 24?** COP24 is the informal name for the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- **The COP takes decisions** to ensure effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention and regularly reviews the implementation of these provisions.

UNFCCC:

- **UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty**, entered into force on 21 March 1994. Now, it has near-universal membership. The UNFCCC has 197 parties as of December 2015.
- **Aim of the UNFCCC:** To prevent ‘dangerous’ human interference with the climate system.

Train 18:

- **Context:** India's first engine-less train-breached the 180 kmph speed threshold during a test run in the Kota-Sawai Madhopur section, becoming the country's fastest train.
- **About Train 18:** Train 18 is a flagship train set; the first prototype has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, in a record time of 20 months. The train is a 100% 'Make in India' project and is claimed to be built at half the cost of a similar train set that is imported.
- **T-18 is a self-propelled** engine-less train (similar to the Metro trains) and is energy-efficient as its coaches will be fitted with LED lights. Coaches will have automatic doors and retractable footsteps. It will be inter-connected with fully sealed gangways along with a GPS-based Passenger Information System. It is provided with of Bio toilets.

Admiral Cup Sailing Regatta 2018:

- **Context:** The ninth edition of the Admiral's Cup Sailing Regatta, the biggest military sailing competitive event in the world as far as the number of participating countries are concerned, is being held at Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala in Kerala. A total of 32 teams, including 30 from foreign countries are taking part in the event.
- **Background:** It was in 2010 that the Indian Navy instituted the 'Admiral's Cup Regatta' as a 'fleet race' in a single crew Olympic class 'Laser Radial' sail boat, with eight foreign Naval Academies participating. This year's regatta has the highest ever number of countries participating in the event with first time participation by Bulgaria and Iran.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities:

- **Context:** The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed every year on December 3 to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development.
- **2018 theme-** "Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".
- **About the Day:** The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was instituted by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1992. It aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.



Annual Startup India Venture Capital Summit 2018 to be held in Goa

- **The Department of Industrial Policy** and Promotion (DIPP) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Government of Goa, is hosting the annual Startup India Venture Capital Summit in Goa on December 07, 2018.
- **The theme of the Summit** is 'Mobilizing Global Capital for Innovation in India.' The event will showcase the Indian startup opportunity for funds from around the world. The summit aims to attract more global capital into the country. The event will enable a dialogue between Government and experienced Venture Capital fund managers on ways to further promote the startup ecosystem in India.
- **The focus of the Summit** is on the huge return-generating potential of India's vast and diverse market monetized through cutting-edge technologies and supported by investor-friendly regulations. The key objectives of the Summit will be to showcase the India opportunity, increase capital flow for Indian startups and further promote ease of doing business.
- **With over 150 participants** expected to attend, it will bring together government officials, domestic and international startups, global fund managers and India's vibrant entrepreneurial community on one platform. Participation is expected from around 100 funds from countries like United States of America, China, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore.
- **India has the world's third largest startup base** with more than 14,000 recognized Startups. More than 8,200 startups were recognized by DIPP in 2018 alone, leading to the creation of more than 89,000 new jobs this year, taking the total job creation contribution of recognized Startups to 1,41,775.
- **Government of Goa** is focused on building a vibrant startup ecosystem in the state. It aims to make the state, one of the most preferred start-up destinations in India, and ensure that Goa features in the top 25 start-up destinations in Asia by 2025.

Distribution of Soil Health Cards (SHC) for optimal utilization of fertilizers

- **Soil Health Card Scheme** has been taken up for the first time in a comprehensive manner across the country. Under the scheme soil health cards are provided to all farmers so as to enable the farmers to apply appropriate recommended dosages of nutrients for crop production and improving soil health and its fertility.
- **The unique features of SHC scheme are:-** Collecting soil samples at a grid of 2.5 ha in irrigated area and 10 ha in un-irrigated areas. Uniform approach in soil testing adopted for 12 parameters viz. primary nutrients (NPK); secondary nutrient (S); micronutrients (B, Zn, Mn, Fe & Cu); and other (pH, EC & OC) for comprehensiveness. GPS enabled soil sampling to create a systematic database and allow monitoring of changes in the soil health over the years.
- **In the 1st cycle** which was implemented in year 2015 to 2017, 2.53 crore soil samples were analysed and 10.73 crore soil health cards distributed to farmers. The 2nd cycle (2017-19) was started from 1st May, 2017 and against target of 2.73 crore soil samples, 1.98 crore samples tested and 6.73 crore cards have been distributed to farmers. The target is to cover 12.04 crore farmers.
- **To enable quick soil** sample testing and distribution of soil health cards, the soil test infrastructure has been upgraded, 9263 soil testing labs have been sanctioned to States. In addition, 1562 village level soil testing projects have been sanctioned to generate employment for rural youth.

Guidelines to ensure safety of children in hostels

- **Need:** The decision comes at a time when institutions, housing children on the request of parents at children's homes, are not registering under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- **Also, the Supreme Court**, in the case of "Exploitation of Children in Orphanages in the State of Tamil Nadu" Vs. Union of India, had directed the Union and the State Governments to enforce minimum standards of care required for such children living in any facility either created by the Government system or by civil society organisations.
- **What next?** The Ministry has directed the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to draft the guidelines in consultation with stakeholders concerned. The guidelines will be notified under the Juvenile Justice Act or the JJ Rules.
- **About the Juveniles Justice Act, 2015:** The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 came into force in January, 2016. The new Act repeals the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. The JJ Act, 2015 provides for strengthened provisions for both children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law.
- **Key provisions:** Definition: The Act clearly defines and classifies offences as petty, serious and heinous, and defines differentiated processes for each category. Keeping in view the increasing number of serious offences being committed by persons in the age group of 16-18 years and recognizing the rights of the victims as being equally important as the rights of juveniles, special provisions are incorporated in the Act to tackle heinous offences committed by individuals in this age group.
- **It establishes** a statutory status for the Child Adoption Resources Authority (CARA). It also proposes several rehabilitation and social integration measures for institutional and non-institutional children. It provides for sponsorship and foster care as completely new measures.
- **Mandatory** registration of all institutions engaged in providing child care is required according to the Act. New offences including illegal adoption, corporal punishment in child care institutions, the use of children by militant groups, and offences against disabled children are also incorporated in the legislation.
- **The new law gives** the Juvenile Justice Board the power to assess whether the perpetrator of a heinous crime aged between 16 and 18, had acted as a 'child' or as an 'adult.' The board will be assisted in this process by psychologists and social experts.
- **It strikes** a fine balance between the demands of the stakeholders asking for continued protection of rights of juveniles and the popular demand of citizens in the light of increasing incidence of heinous crimes by young boys.

Accounting methods of climate fund questioned

- **Background:** Accounting procedures, regarding the flow of climate finance, has become one of the most controversial issues being debated at Katowice, Poland where countries have gathered to agree upon a 'Rule Book' to implement the Paris Agreement of 2015, that commits countries to ensure the earth doesn't warm 2 degree C beyond pre-industrial levels.
- **In 2019**, developed countries are expected to make available \$100 billion annually to developing countries, according to a 2010 agreement in Cancun.
- **What's the issue?** In 2016, developed countries published a road map to \$100 billion, which claimed that public climate finance levels had reached \$41 billion per year in 2013-14. In 2015, India had disputed this figure arguing it was only \$ 2.2 billion. The 2017 numbers also tell a similar story. Only around 12% of total pledges to climate funds have actually materialised into disbursements.
- **What has India pointed out?** It argues that the definition of climate finance in the UNFCCC has remained "imprecise and incomplete." The total pledges to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest multilateral fund, was a "meagre" \$10.3 billion. Further, most of the total climate finance has flowed into mitigation (a reference to preventing carbon dioxide from being emitted). The growth in the reported climate specific finance actually slowed down from 24% between 2014 and 2015 to 14% between 2015 and 2016.
- **About GCF:** The GCF was set up in 2010 under the UNFCCC's financial mechanism to channel funding from developed countries to developing countries to allow them to mitigate climate change and also adapt to disruptions arising from a changing climate.
- **How it helps?** The Green Climate Fund will support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties using thematic funding windows. It is intended to be the centrepiece of efforts to raise Climate Finance of \$100 billion a year by 2020.
- **The Fund** will promote the paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways by providing support to developing countries to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, taking into account the needs of those developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The Fund will strive to maximize the impact of its funding for adaptation and mitigation, and seek a balance between the two, while promoting environmental, social, economic and development co-benefits and taking a gender-sensitive approach.
- **Who will govern the Fund?** The Fund is governed and supervised by a Board that will have full responsibility for funding decisions and that receives the guidance of the Conference of Parties (COP). The Fund is accountable to, and functions under the guidance of, the COP.

- **Background:** In 2015, India listed a series of specific actions it would take to fight climate change in the Paris Agreement.
- **The major ones are:** It would reduce its emissions intensity (or emissions per unit of GDP) by 33 to 35 per cent by the year 2030 compared to the 2005 baseline. It would ensure that at least 40 per cent of its total electricity in the year 2030 would be generated through renewable sources of energy and that would create between 2.5 to three billion tones of additional carbon sinks through extensive afforestation.

India's heaviest satellite GSAT-11

- **GSAT-11- key facts:** GSAT-11 is ISRO's heaviest satellite ever built and weighs about 5854 kilograms. It was launched onboard Ariane-5 launch vehicle from French Guiana. ISRO has revealed that the satellite will be initially placed in the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit and will be later raised to Geostationary Orbit. It will be using the Liquid Apogee Motor which will be onboard the satellite.
- **GSAT-11 is part of ISRO's** new family of high-throughput communication satellite (HTS) fleet that will drive the country's Internet broadband from space to untouched areas. According to ISRO, GSAT-11's multiple spot beam coverage — 32 in Ku band and eight in Ka bands — will deliver an improved service of 16 gbps over the Indian region and nearby islands. The satellite will also have VSAT Terminals which basically will ensure that it can handle large capacity platform to support a huge subscriber base.
- **GSAT 11: How does it work?** GSAT-11 will use a 'multi-spot' approach to maximize its coverage area in the Indian mainland and islands — a far superior communication technology than existing INSATs and GSATs.
- **In a first** for a satellite built by ISRO, GSAT-11 will carry a next-generation I-6K bus (communication satellite hub) to provide services in two widely-used wavelengths for telecommunications: the Ku- and Ka-bands. This makes GSAT-11 three to six times more powerful than any of ISRO's (and India's) satellite roster today. It will provide up to 14 Gigabit/s in both voice and video broadband services anywhere in the Indian mainland or islands over its 15-year lifespan, according to ISRO. The satellite has 32 Ku-band transponders and 8 Ka-band hubs on board. The Ku- and Ka-bands are different frequencies of microwaves in the electromagnetic spectrum.
- **GSAT 11: Why is it important?** GSAT-11 will bring far greater speeds (16 Gbps of it, no less) and capacity to meet growing demand for mobile and internet in households, businesses, and public organisations.
- **Large parts of rural areas** still remain untouched by the scope of commercial telecom today — something GSAT-11 is designed to change. Under Digital India's BharatNet project GSAT-11 will boost access to voice and video streaming in most, if not all, of rural India. With India moving fast towards implementing 'Smart Villages and Cities', they can be efficiently linked through a large communication satellite.

ExseedSAT 1, India's 1st private satellite

- **ExseedSAT 1** was launched into space by Space X along with 63 other satellites from 17 countries.
- **About ExseedSAT 1 and its applications:** The mini communication satellite weighing just a kg with double the size of a Rubik's cube (10 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm) is made up of aluminium alloy. The satellite looks to serve the amateur radio community. The satellite with a lifespan of five years will allow people to receive signals on 145.9 Mhz frequency with the help of a TV tuner. The satellite would provide a big boost to private radio operators and help in coordinating messages among them and help the country in time of disaster.
- **Significance of recent Falcon 9 launch:** With this Falcon 9 launch, SpaceX broke two records. This was the US private space agency's 19th launch of the year topping its previous annual record of 18, which was set last year. Second, the Falcon 9 rocket managed to deliver 64 satellites into orbit breaking the US record (India holds the world record for launching 104 satellites in one go on February 15, 2017).

NASA's Kepler Space telescope

- **Background:** The Kepler Space Telescope has been officially retired by NASA. Its successor space telescope, called TESS, has already started collecting data.
- **About Kepler Mission:** Launched in 2009, the Kepler mission is specifically designed to survey our region of the Milky Way galaxy to discover hundreds of Earth-sized and smaller planets in or near the habitable zone and determine the fraction of the hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy that might have such planets.
- **About TESS mission:** The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) is a NASA mission that will look for planets orbiting the brightest stars in Earth's sky. It was led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with seed funding from Google. Mission: The mission will monitor at least 200,000 stars for signs of exoplanets, ranging from Earth-sized rocky worlds to huge gas giant planets. TESS, however, will focus on stars that are 30 to 100 times brighter than those Kepler examined. This will help astronomers better understand the structure of solar systems outside of our Earth, and provide insights into how our own solar system formed.
- **Orbit:** TESS will occupy a never-before-used orbit high above Earth. The elliptical orbit, called P/2, is exactly half of the moon's orbital period; this means that TESS will orbit Earth every 13.7 days. How it works? It will use transit method to detect exoplanets. It watches distant stars for small dips in brightness, which can indicate that planet has passed in front of them. Repeated dips will indicate planet passing in front of its star. This data has to be validated by repeated observations and verified by scientists.

Kandhamal Haldi

- **Key facts:** The golden yellow spice, named after the district where it is produced, has been cultivated since time immemorial and is known for its medicinal value. Turmeric is the main cash crop of tribal people in Kandhamal. Apart from domestic use, turmeric is also used for cosmetic and medicinal purposes. More than 60,000 families (nearly 50% of Kandhamal population) are engaged in growing the variety. The crop is sustainable in adverse climatic conditions.
- **About GI tag:** What is it? A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. Significance of a GI tag: Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- **Security:** Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product. Provisions in this regard: GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property. At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- **In India,** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it.

Inclusive growth and associated issues. Norms for payment apps

- **Present concerns and the need for norms:** Recently National Cyber Security Coordinator (NCSC) had raised concerns over collection and storage of "sensitive personal data" by payment service providers via applications such as Google Tez, WhatsApp and Paytm. The NCSC had pointed out that there was no agreement between the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the banks and the applications that provided payment services. Additionally, there is no liability of NPCI and the payment service providers.
- **There is also no provision** to protect the interest of the consumer against the pilferage, leakage and sharing of data, which is of sensitive nature.
- **Need of the hour- recommendations by NCSC and RBI:** There is a need to scrutinise all aspects of a relation – legal, technical and financial, between all the stakeholders in the payments ecosystem. Payments service providers must comply with legal framework as well as regulations prescribed by the regulator. RBI should lay down regulations, that would bind the collection, usage and sharing of data, by participants in the payments arena.
- **NPCI:** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all retail payments system in India. It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA). NPCI has ten promoter banks. Its recent work of developing Unified Payments Interface (UPI) aims to move India to a cashless society with only digital transactions. It has successfully completed the development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

Dual-Fuel Usage for Agricultural and Construction Equipment Vehicles

- **The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways** has notified dual-fuel usage for agricultural and construction equipment vehicles.
- **Objective:** It will give a boost to vehicles run on bio-fuel, and help in reducing both cost and pollution.
- **List of Dual-Fuel Vehicles (diesel as primary and CNG, Bio CNG as secondary):** Tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters which have originally been manufactured as dual-fuel or have been converted as such from in-use diesel vehicles.

Rajiv Kumar Committee:

- **What is it?** The Union Government has constituted a six-member committee to look at selling of 149 small and marginal oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) to private and foreign companies to boost domestic output. The panel is chaired by the NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar.



Kolkata-Patna becomes India's second container cargo sector on Inland Waterways IWAI vessel MV RN Tagore sails from Kolkata with PepsiCo, Emami cargo on board

- **After the success of container cargo being shipped** from Kolkata to Varanasi earlier this year, Bihar's capital Patna will be witness to a new landmark in India's Inland Water Transport (IWT) sector with 16 TEUs of container cargo (equivalent to 16 truckloads) belonging to food giants PepsiCo India and Emami Agrotech Ltd from Kolkata reaching the city's Gaighat IWT terminal on river Ganga next week.
- **Inland Waterways Authority of India's (IWA)** vessel MV RN Tagore sailed from Kolkata's Garden Reach Jetty today with the PepsiCo and Emami Agrotech products. It will reach the IWT terminal at Patna in 6-7 days after an 815 kms long voyage on river Ganga (National Waterway-1). The cargo will be unloaded at IWA's inter-modal terminal at Gaighat in Patna from where onward cargo will be loaded. Earlier, on November 12, 2018, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had received the country's first IWT containerised cargo that reached Varanasi from Kolkata.
- **Kolkata-Patna is India's new IWT** origin-destination pair for containerised cargo movement on the National Waterway-1. Plans are at an advanced stage to operationalise Patna-Varanasi sector of NW-1 for container cargo movement. Container cargo transport comes with several inherent advantages. Even as it reduces the handling cost, allows easier modal shift, reduces pilferages and damage, it also enables cargo owners to reduce their carbon footprints.
- **The Ministry of Shipping** is developing NW-1 (River Ganga) under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 5369 crore. The project would enable commercial navigation of vessels with capacity of 1500-2,000 DWT.
- **The movement** will give a fillip to the region's growth and employment. According to the World Bank economic analysis, of the 1.5 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities to be created due to interventions under JMVP, 50,000 will be in Bihar alone.

Ministry of Shipping approves aRs 156 crore Freight Village in Varanasi The Freight Village will give a boost to logistics industry in Varanasi.

- **Ministry of Shipping** approves aRs 156 crore Freight Village in Varanasi The Freight Village will give a boost to logistics industry in Varanasi.
- **The Ministry of Shipping** has approved the development of aRs 156 crore freight village in Varanasi adjoining the Inland Waterways Terminal on River Ganga. The Varanasi freight village will be developed by the Inland Waterways Authority of India. It will serve as a cargo hub, and a centre for aggregation and value addition. It will also provide support to stimulate development of a professional logistics industry in Varanasi.
- **A freight village** is a designated area where facilities for various modes of transportation, distribution of goods and other logistics are available in a synchronized manner on a large scale. The main function of freight villages is management and utilization of various modes of transport, synergizing them and decongesting the existing mode of transportation. Freight villages are basically cargo aggregators which offer various logistic choices to a shipper/ cargo owner; i.e. choice of rail-road; rail-waterway; road-waterway. The choice is based on the optimal/ lowest logistic cost that can be derived by the shipper/ cargo owner. Delivery and coordination of various freight related activities under one roof ensures ease of doing business and makes it possible to realize high truck capacity due to which economic efficiency and activity of the enterprises on site can be improved.

ABOUT THE AWARDS

- **Post-independence**, first three gallantry awards namely the Param Vir Chakra, the Maha Vir Chakra and the Vir Chakra were instituted by the Government of India on 26th January, 1950 which were deemed to have effect from the 15th August, 1947.

- **Thereafter**, other three gallantry awards i.e. the Ashoka Chakra Class-I, the Ashoka Chakra Class-II and the Ashoka Chakra Class-III were instituted by the Government of India on 4th January, 1952, which were deemed to have effect from the 15th August, 1947. These awards were renamed as the Ashoka Chakra, the Kirti Chakra and the Shaurya Chakra respectively in January, 1967.
- **These gallantry awards** are announced twice in a year - first on the occasion of the Republic Day and then on the occasion of the Independence Day. Order of precedence of these awards is the Param Vir Chakra, the Ashoka Chakra, the Mahavir Chakra, the Kirti Chakra, the Vir Chakra and the Shaurya Chakra.
- **DESIGN OF THE MEDAL AND RIBBON PARAM VIR CHAKRA** Medal: Circular in shape, made of bronze, one and three eighth inches in diameter and shall have embossed on the obverse four replicas of "Indra's Vajra" with the State Emblem embossed in the centre. On its reverse, it shall have embossed "PARAM VIR CHAKRA" both in Hindi and in English with two lotus flowers between the Hindi and the English inscriptions.
- **Ribbon: Plain purple coloured ribbon.** Bar: If any recipient of the Chakra shall again perform such an act of bravery as would have made him or her eligible to receive the Chakra, such further act of bravery shall be recorded by a Bar to be attached to the riband by which the Chakra is suspended, and for every such additional act of bravery, an additional Bar shall be added, and any such Bar or Bars may also be awarded posthumously. For every Bar awarded a replica of the "Indra's Vajra" in miniature shall be added to the riband when worn alone.
- **MAHAVIR CHAKRA** Medal: Circular in shape and of standard silver, one and three eighth inches in diameter, and shall have embossed on the obverse a five-pointed heraldic star with the points of the star just touching the rim. The star shall have in the centre a domed gilded State Emblem. On the reverse, it shall have embossed "MAHA VIR CHAKRA" both in Hindi and in English with two lotus flowers between the Hindi and the English inscriptions.
- **Ribbon: The ribbon is of a half-white and half-orange colour.** Bar: If any recipient of the Chakra shall again perform such an act of bravery as would have made him or her eligible to receive the Chakra, such further act of bravery shall be recorded by a Bar to be attached to the riband by which the Chakra is suspended, and for every such additional act of bravery, an additional Bar shall be added, and any such Bar or Bars may also be awarded posthumously. For every Bar awarded a replica of the Chakra in miniature shall be added to the riband when worn alone.
- **VIR CHAKRA** Medal: Circular in shape and of standard silver, one and three eighth inches in diameter, and shall have embossed on the obverse a five-pointed heraldic star with the points of the star just touching the rim. The star shall have in the centre a Chakra and within the Chakra shall be a domed centre piece bearing the gilded State Emblem. On the reverse, it shall have embossed "VIR CHAKRA" both in Hindi and in English with two lotus flowers between the Hindi and the English inscriptions.
- **Ribbon: The ribbon is of half blue and half orange in colour.** Bar: If any recipient of the Chakra shall again perform such an act of bravery as would have made him or her eligible to receive the Chakra, such further act of bravery shall be recorded by a Bar to be attached to the riband by which the Chakra is suspended, and for every such additional act of bravery, an additional Bar shall be added, and any such Bar or Bars may also be awarded posthumously. For every Bar awarded a replica of the Chakra in miniature shall be added to the riband when worn alone.
- **ASHOKA CHAKRA** Medal: Circular in shape, one and three eighth inches in diameter, with rims on both sides. The medal shall be of gold gild. On the obverse of the medal shall be embossed a replica of Ashoka's Chakra in the centre, surrounded by a lotus wreath. Along the rim, on the inner side, shall be a pattern of lotus leaves, flowers and buds. On its reverse shall be embossed the words "Ashok Chakra" both in Hindi and English the two versions being separated by two lotus flowers..
- **Ribbon: Green colour ribbon divided into two equal segments by an orange vertical line.** Bar: If a recipient of the Chakra shall again perform such an act of gallantry as would have made him or her eligible to receive the Chakra, such further act of gallantry shall be recognised by a Bar to be attached to the riband by which the Chakra is suspended and, for every subsequent act of gallantry, an additional Bar shall be added and any such Bar or Bars may also be awarded posthumously. For every Bar awarded a replica of the Chakra in miniature shall be added to the riband when worn alone.
- **KIRTI CHAKRA** Medal: Circular in shape and of standard silver, one and three-eighth inches in diameter, with rims on both sides. On the obverse of the medal shall be embossed a replica of Ashoka's Chakra in the centre, surrounded by a lotus wreath. Along the rim, on the inner side, shall be a pattern of lotus leaves, flowers and buds. On its reverse shall be embossed the words "KIRTI CHAKRA" both in Hindi and English, the two versions being separated by two lotus flowers.
- **Ribbon: Green colour ribbon divided into three equal parts by two orange vertical lines.** Bar: If a recipient of the Chakra shall again perform such an act of gallantry as would have made him or her eligible to receive the Chakra, such further act of gallantry shall be recognised by a Bar to be attached to the riband by which the Chakra is suspended and, for every subsequent act of gallantry, an additional Bar shall be added and such Bar or Bars may also be awarded posthumously. For every such Bar, a replica of the Chakra in miniature shall be added to the riband when worn alone.
- **SHAURYA CHAKRA** Medal: Circular in shape and made of bronze, one and three-eighth inches in diameter, with rims on both sides. On the obverse of the medal shall be embossed a replica of Ashoka's Chakra in the centre, surrounded by a lotus wreath. Along the rim, on the inner side, shall be a pattern of lotus leaves, flowers and buds. On its reverse shall be embossed the words "SHAURYA CHAKRA" both in Hindi and English, the two versions being separated by two lotus flowers.
- **Ribbon: Green colour ribbon divided into four equal parts by three vertical lines.** Bar: If a recipient of the Chakra shall again perform such an act of gallantry as would have made him or her eligible to receive the Chakra, such further act of gallantry shall be recognised by a Bar to be attached to the riband by which the Chakra is suspended and, for every subsequent act of gallantry, an additional Bar shall be added and such Bar or Bars may also be awarded posthumously. For every such Bar, a replica of the Chakra in miniature shall be added to the riband when worn alone.
- **INVESTITURE CEREMONY** Gallantry awards along with some other Defence Distinguished Service awards are conferred to the awardees/Next-of-Kins (NoKs) by the President at the Defence Investiture Ceremony held every year at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. However, the Param Vir Chakra and the Ashoka Chakra are conferred by the President to the awardees/NoKs on the occasion of the Republic Day Parade at the Rajpath.

Restricted Area Permit (RAP) system

- **Need for review:** To develop tourism, the RAP regime, in place since 1963, was lifted around August this year from 29 islands, including the North Sentinel. The lifting of the regime proved problematic and the decision had “many pros and cons that needed to be re-looked”. Recently, U.S. citizen John Allen Chau was killed in the North Sentinel Island.
- **What is Restricted Area Permit (RAP) regime?** RAP regime was notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963. Under it, foreign nationals are not normally allowed to visit protected or restricted area unless Government is satisfied that there are extra-ordinary reasons to justify their visit.
- **Every foreigner, except citizen** of Bhutan, who desires to enter and stay in protected or restricted area, is required to obtain special permit from competent authority having power to issue such permits to foreigner, seeking it. Citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals of Pakistani origin are exception and are not allowed to enter such areas.

Witness Protection Scheme

- **Background:** The issue of witness protection scheme had cropped up earlier when the top court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking protection for witnesses in rape cases involving Asaram Bapu.
- **During the hearing,** Attorney General KK Venugopal had told the top court that the draft scheme, which has now been finalised, would be made into a law “in due course”, but till then the court should direct the states to start implementing it.
- **Highlights of the draft scheme:** The draft witness protection scheme has been finalised in consultation with the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD). The types of protection measures envisaged under the scheme are to be applied in proportion to the threat and they are not expected to go on for infinite time.
- **The scheme envisages** that there should be safeguards that witnesses and accused do not come face to face during investigation or trial and adequate security measures should be there for the safety of the witnesses. The scheme provides for identity protection and giving a new identity to the witness. The scheme shall extend to the whole of the India except the State of Jammu & Kashmir.
- **As per the scheme,** police escort will be provided to witnesses who are threatened and, if needed, they would be relocated to a safe house. The scheme also says mails and phone calls of the witnesses would be monitored to trace the person threatening them. It said a separate witness protection fund will be created in each state to meet the expenses incurred under the scheme.
- **Witness deposition** complexes will be set up in all district courts by the states and union territories within a year where the witnesses could fearlessly depose against the high and mighty without coming face-to-face with the accused.
- **It has three categories of witnesses based on the threat perception: Category ‘A’:** Where the threat extends to life of witness or his family members and their normal way of living is affected for a substantial period, during investigation/trial or even thereafter.
- **Category ‘B’:** Where the threat extends to safety, reputation or property of the witness or his family members, only during the investigation process or trial.
- **Category ‘C’:** Where the threat is moderate and extends to harassment or intimidation of the witness or his family member's, reputation or property, during the investigation process.
- **Significance of the scheme:** The witnesses, being eyes and ears of justice, play an important role in bringing perpetrators of crime to justice. The scheme is the first attempt at the national-level to holistically provide for the protection of the witnesses, which will go a long way in eliminating secondary victimization. This scheme attempts at ensuring that witnesses receive appropriate and adequate protection. It also strengthens the criminal justice system in the country and will consequently enhance national security scenario.
- **Need:** Victims and witnesses of serious crimes are particularly at risk when the perpetrator is powerful, influential, or rich and the victims or witnesses belong to a socially or economically marginalised community. Girls and women who report sexual violence are often even more vulnerable and face extreme pressure or direct threats from the accused.
- **Also, witnesses** need to have the confidence to come forward to assist law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities. They need to be assured that they will receive support and protection from intimidation and the harm that criminal groups may seek to inflict upon them in attempts to discourage or punish them from co-operating. Hence, legislative measures to emphasise prohibition against tampering of witnesses have become the imminent and inevitable need of the day.

- In 2003, Justice V Malimath Committee on criminal justice system had recommended enacting a separate witness protection law and in 2006, the Law Commission of India, in its 198th report, provided for a draft witness protection law. Besides, countries such as USA, United Kingdom, China, Italy, Canada, Hong Kong and Ireland have witness protection scheme.

World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)

- **Globally**, 1.4 million patents were granted in 2017. China's patent authority led the world in the number of patents granted with 420,144 and was followed by the US with 318,829, according to the WIPO.
- **Highlights of the report- India related key facts:** The number of patents granted by India shot up by 50% in 2017, keeping up a trend of steep increases. The patents granted by India increased from 8,248 in 2016 to 12,387 last year.
- **Of the patents** granted last year, 1,712 went to entities and individuals based in India, and 10,675 to foreigners. While India ranked 10th in the number of patents given last year, no Indian company or university figures in last year's global list of the top 50 patent applicants.
- **About WIPO:** The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is one of the 17 specialized agencies of the United Nations. It was created in 1967 "to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world." It has currently 188 member states, administers 26 international treaties, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Non-members** are the states of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, South Sudan and Timor-Leste. Palestine has observer status. India is a member of WIPO and party to several treaties administered by WIPO.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

- **Need for review- challenges ahead:** There are daunting challenges ahead such as the discovery of new toxic chemicals, advancements in deployment and dissemination techniques. There is an increasing threat of use of chemical weapons by non-state actors such as IS and other terror outfits.
- **The growing complexity of the global security** environment calls for greater vigilance and continued efforts by both OPCW and the member states towards achieving general and complete chemical disarmament.
- **Despite best efforts**, there has been an increase in allegations and incidents of use of chemical weapons in different parts of the world such as Malaysia, UK and Northern Ireland, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.
- **About OPCW:** The OPCW is an independent, autonomous international organisation with a working relationship with the United Nations. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997. The organisation was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize "for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons".
- **The OPCW Member States** share the collective goal of preventing chemistry from ever again being used for warfare, thereby strengthening international security. To this end, the Convention contains four key provisions:
- **Destroying all existing chemical weapons under international verification by the OPCW.** Monitoring chemical industry to prevent new weapons from re-emerging. Providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical threats. Fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.
- **The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:** Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons. The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons. Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use. Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity. The use of riot control agents "as a method of warfare."
- **Way ahead:** The use of these weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances is unjustifiable. The efforts in the OPCW should be aimed at eliminating all the possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons.
- **The need of the hour** is constructive engagement, dialogue and unity of purpose. This is the only way forward. India remains willing and open for discussions with all States Parties to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation within the framework of the Convention.

World Soil Day

- **Aim:** To communicate messages on importance of soil quality for food security, healthy ecosystems and human well-being. Theme for year 2018: 'Be the Solution to Soil Pollution'.
- **Historical background of World Soil Day:** An international day to celebrate Soil was recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002. Under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand and within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, FAO has supported the formal establishment of WSD as a global awareness raising platform.
- **The FAO Conference unanimously** endorsed World Soil Day in June 2013 and requested its official adoption at the 68th UN General Assembly. In December 2013 the UN General Assembly responded by designating 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.
- **Why December 5 was chosen?** The date of 5 December for WSD was chosen because it corresponds with the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, who officially sanctioned the event.
- **Soil pollution- concerns:** These days pollution is a worry – and soil is also affected. Soil pollution is a hidden danger that lurks beneath our feet. 1/3 of our global soils are already degraded. Yet we risk losing more due to this hidden danger. Soil pollution can be invisible and seems far away but everyone, everywhere is affected.
- **With a growing population** expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, soil pollution is a worldwide problem which degrades our soils, poisons the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe. The entity of the problem is still unknown as not certain data are available on a global scale.
- **Soils have a great potential** to filter and buffer contaminants, degrading and attenuating the negative effects of pollutants, but this capacity is finite. Most of the pollutants originate from human activities, such as unsustainable farming practices, industrial activities and mining, untreated urban waste and other non-environmental friendly practices.
- **As technology evolves**, scientists are able to identify previously undetected pollutants, but at the same time these technological improvements lead to new contaminants being released into the environment.
- **SDGs:** In the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, 12, and 15 have targets which commend direct consideration of soil resources, especially soil pollution and degradation in relation to food security.
- **Need for conservation and protection of soil:** Soil holds three times as much carbon as the atmosphere and can help us meet the challenges of a changing climate. 815 million people are food insecure and 2 billion people are nutritionally insecure, but we can mitigate this through soil. 95% of our food comes from soil. 33% of our global soils are already degraded.
- **Way ahead:** According to the FAO, it is vital to tackle soil pollution to reduce the risk of food security and human health. By preventing soil pollution, we can also address soil degradation, adapt to climate change and stem rural migration.

India Water Impact Summit 2018

- **India Water Impact Summit:** It is an annual event where stakeholders get together to discuss, debate and develop model solutions for some of the biggest water-related problems in the country.
- **The discussions** this year will be on the rejuvenation of the Ganga River Basin. There will be multi-country dialogue on the subject, with showcasing of technological innovations, research, policy frameworks and funding models from India and abroad.
- **The efforts** may take various forms including (but not limited to): data collection (sensors, LIDAR, modelling etc), hydrology, e-flows, agriculture, wastewater and more.
- **Ganga Financing Forum:** The Summit introduced the inaugural Ganga Financing Forum that will bring a number of institutions to a common knowledge, information and partnership platform. The Financing Forum will bring together financial institutions and investors interested in Namami Gange programmes.

Global Carbon Project

- **Highlights of the study:** India, the third-highest contributor, is projected to see emissions rise by 6.3% from 2017. The 2.7% projected global rise in 2018 has been driven by appreciable growth in coal use for the second year in a row, and sustained growth in oil and gas use.
- **The 10 biggest emitters in 2018 are** China, U.S., India, Russia, Japan, Germany, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Canada. The EU as a region of countries ranks third. China's emissions accounted for 27% of the global total, having grown an estimated 4.7% in 2018 and reaching a new all-time high.
- **Emissions in the U.S.:** which has withdrawn from its commitment to the Paris Agreement, account for 15% of the global total, and look set to have grown about 2.5% in 2018 after several years of decline.
- **Limiting global warming** to the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of keeping the global temperature increase this century to well below 2°C, would need carbon dioxide emissions to decline by 50% by 2030 and reach net zero by about 2050.
- **Though coal** use contributed to the rise in 2018 from last year, it still remains below its historical high in 2013 but may exceed that if current growth continues.
- **About Global Carbon Project:** The Global Carbon Project was formed in 2001 to help the international science community to establish a common, mutually agreed knowledge base that supports policy debate and action to slow the rate of increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- **It is a Global Research Project** of Future Earth and a research partner of the World Climate Research Programme. It was formed to work with the international science community to establish a common and mutually agreed knowledge base to support policy debate and action to slow down and ultimately stop the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- **The Global Carbon Project** works collaboratively with the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, the World Climate Programme, the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change and Diversitas, under the Earth System Science Partnership.

Distribution of Soil Health Cards (SHC) for optimal utilization of fertilizers

- **Soil Health Card Scheme** has been taken up for the first time in a comprehensive manner across the country. It is provided to all farmers.
- **Objective:** It is to enable the farmers to apply appropriate recommended dosages of nutrients for crop production and improving soil health and its fertility.
- **Unique Features:** Collecting soil samples at a grid of 2.5 ha in irrigated area and 10 ha in un-irrigated areas. Uniform approach in soil testing adopted for 12 parameters primary nutrients (NPK), secondary nutrient (S); micronutrients (B, Zn, Mn, Fe & Cu); and other (pH, EC & OC) for comprehensiveness. GPS enabled soil sampling to create a systematic database and allow monitoring of changes in the soil health over the years.
- **Background:** National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) will be implemented during 12th Plan to make agriculture more productive, sustainable and climate resilient; to conserve natural resources; to adopt comprehensive soil health management practices; to optimize utilization of water resources; etc. Soil Health Management (SHM) is one of the most significant interventions under NMSA.
- **Aims of SHM:** To promote Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) through judicious use of chemical fertilizers including secondary and micro nutrients in conjunction with organic manures and bio-fertilisers for improving soil health and its productivity; To strengthen soil and fertilizer testing facilities to give soil test based recommendations to farmers for improving soil fertility;
- **To ensure quality control** requirements of fertilizers, bio-fertilizers under Fertiliser Control Order, 1985; To upgrade skill and knowledge of soil testing laboratory staff, extension staff and farmers through training and demonstrations; To promote organic farming practices, etc.

National Integration tour

- **The National Integration Tours** are educational and motivational tours for youth of Jammu & Kashmir and North Eastern States.

- **Aim of the National Integration Tour:** It aims to provide an insight into the rich heritage of the country as well as various developmental and industry initiatives that are underway. This initiative will expose them to various career options and enable them to interact with renowned personalities.
- **Background:** The National Integration Tour has been initiated as part of the Indian Army's ongoing outreach programme to foster the spirit of National Integration across the entire swathe of the country.



NRDWP - National Rural Drinking Water Programme.

- **This programme** was launched in April 2009 by the then Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation presently Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, for assisting states in providing drinking water to the rural population of India.
- **This programme** has incorporated paradigmatic changes in its previous version called the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, by emphasizing on water supply systems which are planned and managed by the community at the village level, for ensuring sustainable drinking water availability, convenient delivery systems and achieving water security at the household level.
- **Norms of coverage of habitations under NRDWP** - 40 lpcd is the minimum or lifeline supply that has to be provided to a habitation for considering it as "Fully Covered" under the NRDWP

Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR)

- **The Non Lapsable Central Pool** of Resources (NLCPR) Scheme came into existence in 1998 under then Planning Commission. Subsequently, it was transferred to DoNER in 2001. Since inception of the Scheme, various projects were sanctioned across sectors for development of North Eastern Region as per Scheme guidelines framed for the purpose and revised from time to time.
- **The objective of NLCPR Scheme** is to fill up the gap in infrastructure sector of the North Eastern Region through sanctioning the projects prioritized by the State Governments. Ministry gets Annual Budgetary Allocation from Ministry of Finance for funding the projects under NLCPR Scheme.
- **Funds under the scheme** are shared between the Central and State Governments on 90:10 basis. The approved funds under the scheme are released in three installments in the ratio of 40:40:20 for the projects sanctioned prior to the revised guidelines 2016 based on the commensurate physical and financial progress of the projects.
- **Based on past experiences** and an exhaustive review undertaken during 2015-16, the Scheme Guidelines was revised in 2016 to make the process of retention and sanction of projects more transparent and participative. The new provisions incorporated in the Guidelines empower the State Governments apart from discouraging parking of funds and fast-tracking the entire process from conceptualization to completion of projects. The salient features of Revised Guidelines are as under:-

Constitution of State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC) in each State to prioritize and recommend projects for retention/sanction.

- **Delegation of power of techno-economic** vetting of the DPRs to State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC) headed by the Chief Secretary of the State. Number of installments for release of funds reduced to two i.e. 40% and 60% based on physical and financial progress reports.
- **To ensure just-on-time release of funds**, initially a token amount of Rs. 10 lakh to be released and balance amount of first installment to be released after receipt of letter of award of the contract.
- **So far, one thousand six hundred forty three** (1643) projects at an approved cost of Rs. 16366.57 crore, of various sectors have been taken up for funding under the NLCPR Scheme in eight States of North Eastern Region.

- **After coming to existence a new Central Sector Scheme** in December, 2017 namely, "North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme" (NESIDS) in place of NLCPR Scheme, no new project is taken up for funding under the NLCPR Scheme. However, funding for ongoing projects under the Scheme will be continued till March, 2020 for their completion.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy conferred Skoch Award for National Significance

- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**, Government of India has been conferred the Skoch Award for National Significance at an event held recently in New Delhi. The award was received by Secretary, Ministry of New Renewable Energy Shri Anand Kumar.
- **The award has been conferred on the Ministry** considering its purpose and critical role played in installing about 73 GW renewable energy capacity in the country. With 21 per cent of total installed capacity, within the year renewable energy grossed a magic figure of providing one billion units of electricity in the country.
- **Today, India ranks 4 in the world in wind** energy capacity and 5th in solar & total renewable energy capacity installed in the world. India has played a critical role in setting up of international solar alliance. Further, India moved a resolution during the first meeting for making it a global initiative.

Food and Agriculture organisation (FAO)

- **Food and Agriculture organisation (FAO)** Council approves India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023
- **FAO Council also approves India's membership** to the Executive Board of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) for 2020 and 2021
- **Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** Shri Radha Mohan Singh has said that the 160th session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Council, currently underway in Rome, approved India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023. On behalf of all countrymen the minister conveyed his gratitude to the countries who voiced their support. He added that this will enhance global awareness to bring back these nutri-cereals to the plate, for food and nutrition security and hence increase production for resilience to challenges posed globally by climate change.
- **The Minister said that in the Modi regime**, India's prowess in agriculture diplomacy has grown. This international endorsement comes in the backdrop of India celebrating 2018 as the National Year of Millets for promoting cultivation and consumption of these nutri-cereals.

MAYURBHANJ CHHAU

- **About Mayurbhanj Chhau:** Mayurbhanj Chhau dance form has a long history. Originally a tribal dance, which originated from the forests of Mayurbhanj, Odisha in the 18th century, it got the status of a martial art form in the 19th century.
- **Slowly & steadily Mayurbhanj Chhau** left its martial character and mellowed. Under the Royal Patronage it received proper attention & direction and showed a bright future and utmost perfection as a dance of excellent style in the field of eastern art and culture of India.
- **Background:** Chhau is found in three styles named after the location where they are performed, i.e. the Purulia Chau of Bengal, the Seraikella Chau of Jharkhand, and the Mayurbhanj Chau of Odisha.
- **The most prominent** difference among the three subgenres is regarding the use of masks. While, the Seraikella and Purulia subgenres of Chhau use masks during the dance, the Mayurbhanj Chhau uses none.

Kamsale dance

- **About Kamsale:** Kamsale is known as Beesu Kamsale. It is a unique folk art performed by the devotees of God Mahadeshwara.
- **Kamsale** also refers to a brass made musical instrument. Its origin is traced to the Mythological period. The kamsale comprises a cymbal in one hand and a bronze disc in the other and is used to produce a rhythmic clang. It is a group dance form performed by the menfolk in villages in the Mysore, Nanjanagudu, Kollegala and Bangalore areas in Karnataka. Kamsale is used both as an instrument and also as a prop by the dancers themselves.
- **The Kamsale nritya** is closely connected to a tradition of Male Mahadeshwara, or Lord Shiva worship by the haalu kuruba community. Most of the dancers are also drawn from this community. The dance is performed to rhythmic and melodious music that is sung in praise of "Lord Male Mahadeshwara" or "Shiva". The dance is a part of a 'diiksha', or oath and is taught by teacher or spiritual leader.

Central Information Commission

- **Background:** The 11-member Commission, the highest appeal body available to applicants seeking information under the RTI Act, is currently operating with only three members in the wake of multiple retirements. The eight vacancies include the Chief Information Commissioner, who completed his tenure last month.
- **How is Central Information Commission constituted?** Under the provision of Section-12 of RTI Act 2005 the Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute a body to be known as the Central Information Commission.
- **Composition:** The Central Information Commission shall consist of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and such number of Central Information Commissioners not exceeding 10 as may be deemed necessary.
- **What is the eligibility criteria and what is the process of appointment of CIC/IC?** Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005 provides as follows. The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **Who can be CIC and ICs?** Section 12(5) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance.
- **Section 12(6)** of the RTI Act 2005 provides that Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.
- **What is the term of office and other service conditions of CIC?** Section 13 of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment: Section 13(5)(a) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- **What is the term of office and other service conditions of IC?** Section 13(2) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment as such Information Commissioners provided.
- **Provided that every** Information Commissioner shall on vacating his office under this sub-section be eligible for appointment as the Chief Information Commissioner in the manner specified in sub-section (3) of section 12 of the RTI Act 2005:
- **Provided further that** where the Information Commissioner is appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner, his term of office shall not be more than five years in aggregate as the Information Commissioner and the Chief Information Commissioner.
- **Section 13(5)(b)** of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of an Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of an Election Commissioner.

Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana

- **Highlights of the scheme:** Who can avail this offer? 1,100 senior citizens from every constituency of Delhi will be able to avail this facility at one go.
- **Under this free pilgrimage scheme,** a Delhi resident above 60 years will be eligible to take free pilgrimage along with his or her spouse. There is no income criterion but preference will be given to those from economically weaker sections on first-come-first-serve basis. Employees of central, state and local government or autonomous bodies are not eligible for the scheme.
- **Benefits:** The applicant can also take along an attendant above the age of 20 years, if he or his spouse is above 70 years. The expenditure of the attendant will also be borne by the Delhi government. Those selected for pilgrimage will be covered with an insurance of Rs 1 lakh each. The applicant will have to give a self-certificate that all information being given by them is correct and they have not availed the scheme in the past.
- **Selection of pilgrims:** The selection of pilgrims will be done through draw of lots and respective area MLAs will certify whether the intended beneficiaries belong to Delhi or not.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban

- **Challenges ahead:** This is going to be a tall task given the current fiscal arithmetic. The scheme also faces headwinds such as unavailability of land in prime areas, low participation of private developers on account of brand dilution, bidding mechanism, stringent cost and time schedules resulting in low yields, increasing construction costs due to absence of bulk sourcing of materials, and lack of new technology that impacts productivity, cost efficiency and quality.
- **Significance of the scheme:** PMAY-U does offer a huge opportunity for several sectors by setting off a virtuous cycle. One crore houses would mean an opportunity for over Rs 2 lakh crore of home loans, and incremental consumption of 80-100 million tonne of cement and 10-15 million tonne of steel. The construction opportunity is of about four billion square feet over the life of PMAY-U. And all that would translate into 9-10 crore incremental jobs over the execution period.
- **About PMAY- Urban:** The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA), in Mission mode envisions provision of Housing for All by 2022, when the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence.
- **The Mission** seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme verticals:
 - **Slum rehabilitation** of Slum Dwellers with participation of private developers using land as a resource. Promotion of Affordable Housing for weaker section through credit linked subsidy. Affordable Housing in Partnership with Public & Private sectors. Subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction /enhancement.
 - **Key facts:** The beneficiaries are poor and people living under EWS and LIG categories in the country. The scheme is divided into three phases. In the first phase, a total of 100 cities will be covered from April 2015 to March 2017. In phase two, 200 cities will be covered from April 2017 to March 2019. In the third phase, the leftover cities will be covered from April 2019 to March 2022. The government is providing an interest subsidy of 6.5% on housing loans which can be availed by beneficiaries for 15 years from start of loan date.
 - **The government** will grant Rs 1 lakh to all the beneficiaries of the scheme. In addition, Rs 1.5 lakh will be given to all eligible urban poor who want to construct their houses in urban areas or plan to go for renovation in their existing houses. One can also avail loans under this scheme to build toilets in existing houses.

Beach pollution in India

- **Highlights of the report:** The NCCR conducted a qualitative analysis of the litter on six different beaches on the eastern and western coasts. The study notes that beach pollution is on rise in the country.
- **Tourism and fishing** are the biggest culprits, contributing most of the plastic litter on beaches. The study found that plastic litter from tourism alone accounted for 40%-96% of all beach litter.
- **At Chennai's Elliot's Beach,** for instance, plastics left by tourists accounted for 40% of all the litter, while at Gopalpur in Odisha, it was as high as 96%. As for the other four beaches, plastics formed 66% of the overall litter on Fort Kochi Beach, 60% at Karnataka's Karwar beach, 87% at Visakhapatnam's R.K. Beach, and 81% at Andaman Island's Rangachang beach. After tourism, fishing was the next biggest source of litter. While fishing nets were a major contributor, the

processing of fish on the beach also produced a lot of litter.

- **Also, the proportion** of biomedical litter was high in urban areas, such as Elliot's Beach and Fort Kochi Beach. Other than the plastic litter dropped by tourists, similar waste from creeks and inlets made its way into the sea in the monsoon. Most of the litter consisted of plastic bottles, cutlery, and thermocol.
- **Way ahead- need of the hour:** India needs a national marine litter policy to control and manage waste on land and prevent its entry into the marine environment.
- **Experts suggest** installation of debris booms and fin deflectors upstream as measures to reduce the quantity of floating solid waste entering coastal waters. India also needs to start blue-flagging its beaches. The 'blue flag' is a globally recognised eco-label awarded to beaches and marinas that adhere to strict environmental and safety norms.
- **More about 'Blue Flag' project:** Launched in December 2017 by the Environment Ministry, the prime objective of the project is to enhance standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches. Under the project, each state or union territory has been asked to nominate a beach which will be funded through the ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme.
- **Criteria for certification:** To achieve the Blue Flag standards, a beach has to strictly comply with 33 environment and tourism-related conditions. The standards were established by the Copenhagen-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in 1985. For example- a beach must be plastic-free and equipped with a waste management system. Clean water should be available for tourists, apart from international amenities. The beach should have facilities for studying the environmental impact around the area.

Study on air pollution and its effects

- **Highlights of the study:** One in every eight deaths in India is attributable to air pollution, which now contributes to more disease burden than smoking. In fact, the average life expectancy in India would have been 1.7 years higher if the air pollution level were less than the minimal level.
- **In 2017**, air pollution accounted for 12.4 lakh deaths in India, which included 6.7 lakh deaths due to outdoor particulate matter air pollution and 4.8 lakh deaths due to household air pollution. Over half of the deaths due to air pollution were in persons less than 70 years of age. With 18% of the global population, India suffered 26% of premature mortality and health loss attributable to air pollution globally.
- **Around 77%** of India's population is exposed to outdoor air pollution levels above the National Ambient Air Quality Standards safe limit. States in east and north India had some of the highest levels of both ambient particulate matter and household air pollution, especially Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand. Delhi, Haryana, and Punjab in north India had some of the highest ambient particulate matter pollution exposure in the country.
- **However**, the report recognises the increasing public and policy attention to control air pollution in India. Air pollution has become a year-round phenomenon particularly in north India which causes health impacts far beyond the seasonal rise of respiratory illnesses. Air pollution is now the leading risk factor for chronic obstructive lung disease in India, and a major contributor to pneumonia and lung cancer.
- **Concerns:** The report assumes significance as it follows several such reports by the World Health Organisation which have already detailed the major health risks posed by foul air in the country. A special report released by WHO recently at COP 24 said India can get massive health gains— up to \$8 trillion by pursuing global warming limit of 1.5 °C.
- **The UN agency** had recently also linked air pollution with increasing child mortality. In 2017, India witnessed 1,10,000 premature deaths of children due to air pollution, highest in the world in the category of children under five years of age.
- **Way ahead:** It is important to have robust estimates of the health impact of air pollution in every state of India in order to have a reference for improving the situation. Household air pollution is reducing in India, facilitated by the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. There is increasing political momentum in India to address air pollution.
- **The findings** in the study systematically document the variations among states, which would serve as a useful guide for making further progress in reducing the adverse impact of air pollution in the country.
- **Systematic and sustained efforts** are needed to address the variety of sources contributing to air pollution, which include transport vehicles, construction activity, industry and thermal power emissions, residential and commercial solid fuel use, waste and agriculture burning, diesel generators, and manual road dust sweeping.

Freight Village in Varanasi

- **The Ministry of Shipping** has approved the development of Rs. 156 crore freight village in Varanasi adjoining the Inland Waterways Terminal on River Ganga. The Varanasi freight village will be developed by the Inland Waterways Authority of India.
- **Advantages:** It will serve as a cargo hub, and a centre for aggregation and value addition. It will also provide support to stimulate development of a professional logistics industry in Varanasi.
- **What is a Freight Village?** A freight village is a designated area where facilities for various modes of transportation, distribution of goods and other logistics are available in a synchronized manner on a large scale. Freight villages are cargo aggregators, offers various logistic choices to a shipper/cargo owner; i.e. choice of railroad; rail-waterway; road-waterway.
- **Major Function:** The main function is management and utilization of various modes of transport, synergizing them and decongesting the existing mode of transportation.
- **World Bank Study:** A World Bank pre-feasibility study has found Varanasi to be a suitable site for the freight village. The traffic volume on inland waterway is expected to increase with the commissioning of the multi modal terminal being built under the Jal Marg Vikas project.
- **Inland Waterways Authority of India:** It came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation. The Authority primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from Ministry of Shipping.

Cabinet approves Agriculture Export Policy, 2018

- **The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved the Agriculture Export Policy, 2018.** The Cabinet has also approved the proposal for establishment of Monitoring Framework at Centre with Commerce as the nodal Department with representation from various line Ministries/Departments and Agencies and representatives of concerned State Governments, to oversee the implementation of Agriculture Export Policy.
- **Vision of the Agriculture Export Policy:** Harness export potential of Indian agriculture, through suitable policy instruments, to make India global power in agriculture and raise farmers' income.
- **Objectives:** To double agricultural exports from present US\$ 30+ Billion to US\$ 60+ Billion by 2022 and reach US\$ 100 Billion in the next few years thereafter, with a stable trade policy regime. To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agricultural exports including focus on perishables. To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional Agri products exports.
- **To provide** an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and deal with sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues. To strive to double India's share in world agri exports by integrating with global value chain at the earliest. Enable farmers to get benefit of export opportunities in overseas market.
- **Background:** The Government has come out with a policy to double farmers' income by 2022. Exports of agricultural products would play a pivotal role in achieving this goal.

Sino-India Joint Exercise Hand-in-Hand 2018

- **Exercise Hand-in-Hand** is conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of India and China. The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/Counter Terrorist environment under UN mandate. The conduct of Joint Military Exercises is also an important step to uphold the values of Peace, Prosperity and Stability in the region.
- **Aim of the Exercise:** To build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries. To enhance ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command. To acquaint both the Armies with each other's operating procedure in the backdrop of counter terrorism environment.
- **Exercise Hand-in-Hand 2018** will go a long way to further cement relationship between both the nations and will act as a catalyst in bringing bonhomie at grassroots levels between the armies of both countries.

- **Background:** The last time the two armies had the joint exercise was in 2016, in Pune, but due to tensions between the two sides over Doklam due to standoff between the armies for more than 70 days, the armies skipped the 'Hand-in-Hand' exercise in 2017.
- **Doklam** is a strategically important area which is claimed by Bhutan. Post Doklam, both countries had been working to increase cooperation. In fact, two leaders met four times on the sidelines of the recently concluded G-20 summit in Argentina.

Sahitya Akademi Award:

- **Context:** India's national academy of letters Sahitya Academy has announced names of 24 poets and authors who will be conferred the prestigious 2018 Sahitya Akademi Award in 24 different Indian languages.
- **About Sahitya Akademi Award:** It is literary honour that is conferred annually on Indian writers for their outstanding works of literary merit. It was established in 1954. It is conferred annually on writers of outstanding works in one of the twenty-four major Indian languages (22 Scheduled Languages+ English and Rajasthani).
- **The award** consists of a casket containing an engraved copper-plaque (designed by film-maker Satyajit Ray), a shawl and cheque of Rs.1 Lakh.



About SBM

- **To accelerate the efforts** to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation, the Prime Minister of India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October, 2014. The Mission Coordinator for SBM is Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) with two Sub-Missions, the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). Together, they aim to achieve Swachh Bharat by 2019, as a fitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th Birth Anniversary.
- **In Rural India**, this would mean improving the levels of cleanliness through Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities and making villages Open Defecation Free (ODF), clean and sanitised.
- **Vision** The aim of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) is to achieve a clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2nd October, 2019
- **Objectives To bring about an improvement** in the general quality of life in the rural areas, by promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation. To accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019.
- **To motivate communities** to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness creation and health education.
- **To encourage cost effective** and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation.
- **To develop, wherever required**, community managed sanitation systems focusing on scientific Solid & Liquid Waste Management systems for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.
- **To create significant positive impact** on gender and promote social inclusion by improving sanitation especially in marginalized communities

Namami Gange

- **Namami Gange Programme** is an initiative of Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR), comprising of making villages on the bank of River Ganga ODF and interventions dealing with solid and liquid waste management are being implemented by MDWS.
- **A convention of Gram Panchayats** was organized in Allahabad on 20th August 2016 to provide impetus to the initiative. Over 2000 GP representatives from across five states participated in this event which was attended by Union Minister, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, and Union Minister of Water Resources, Sushri Uma Bharti.
- **All villages located across 52 districts** of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal has since been made ODF by MDWS with active help of state governments.
- **Verification of the quality** of ODF status in these villages has been taken up and complete verification is expected to be completed by August 07, 2017.

Swachhta Pakhwada

- **Swachhta Pakhwada** started in April 2016 with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhta by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.

- **An annual calendar is pre-circulated** among the Ministries to help them plan for the Pakhwada activities.
- **The Ministries observing Swachhta Pakhwada** are monitored closely using online monitoring system of Swachhta Samiksha where action plans, images, videos related to Swachhta activities are uploaded and shared.
- **After observing Swachhta Pakhwada**, Ministries/ Departments announce their achievements through a press conference and other communication tools.
- **For the Pakhwada fortnight**, observing ministries are considered as Swachhta Ministries and are expected to bring qualitative Swachhta improvements in their jurisdictions.

Swachh Swasth Sarvatra (SSS)

- **Joint initiative between the MDWS and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**. Objective : To build on and leverage the achievements of two complementary programmes – SBM and Kayakalp (MoHFW)
- **The initiative involves** focusing on WASH parameters in selected hospitals, priority ODF action in areas around identified health centres, and advanced sanitation training for doctors and health workers.
- **MoHFW has identified** and shared 532 Kayakalp Award winning PHCs list with MDWS MDWS has mapped those GPs where these PHCs are situated to complete ODF on priorities basis.
- **MDWS has finalized** a training module to train 700+ Health Workers of Kayakalp Award winning CHCs/PHCs on WASH parameters, training will be conducted by UNICEF.

Swachh Iconic Places (SIP)

- **Under the inspiration** of Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Ministry has taken up a multi-stakeholder initiative focusing on cleaning up 100 places across India that are "iconic" due to their heritage, religious and/or cultural significance.
- **The goal of the Initiative** is to improve the cleanliness conditions at these places to a distinctly higher level This initiative is in partnership with Ministries of Urban Development, Tourism and Culture with MDWS being the nodal ministry.
- **All Iconic Sites** have designated PSUs for financial and technical support.
- **Swachh Iconic Places** The 10 iconic sites which were taken up in the first phase are

- Ajmer Sharif Dargah, Ajmer, Rajasthan
CST, Mumbai, Maharashtra
Golden Temple, Amritsar, Punjab
Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati, Assam
Maikarnika Ghat, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, Tamil Nadu
Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Katra, J&K
Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri, Odisha
The Taj Mahal, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh

PSU Sponsors for SIP Sites - Phase 2

Sr. No. Iconic Places

1	Gangotri, Uttarakhand
2	Yamunotri, Uttarakhand
3	Mahakaleshwar Temple, Ujjain
4	Char Minar, Hyderabad
5	Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi, Goa
6	Adi Shankaracharya's abode Kaladi, Ernakulam, Kerala
7	Gomateshwar, Shravanbelgola, Karnataka
8	Baijnath Dham, Deoghar, Jharkhand
9	Gaya Tirth, Bihar
10	Somnath temple, Gujarat

Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK)

- **MDWS has been pro-actively** mobilizing funds for Swachh Bharat Kosh. It was started in Oct,2014 and includes both individuals contributions as well as corporates.
- **The Ministry** had organized two detailed meetings with the corporate sector and has taken part in many other interactions with both public and private sector corporates, following which the contributions to the Kosh have gone up.
- **The total donations** to SBK yearwise are Rs 159.6 cr (2014-15), Rs 253.24 cr (2015-16), Rs 245.04 cr (2016-17) and Rs 3.78 cr (till July 13 in 2017-18). Funds of around Rs 332.64 cr has been released from SBK till now to various states.

Krishnamurthy Subramanian

- **New chief economic adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian replaces Arvind Subramanian.** Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has cleared the appointment of Krishnamurthy Subramanian as the Chief Economic Adviser for three years.
- **The CEA** in the finance ministry is a key contributor to the government's overall strategy in managing the economy and offers a critique of the hits and misses through the economic survey.
- **About CEA** The Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) is the economic advisor to the Government of India. The CEA is the ex-officio cadre controlling authority of the Indian Economic Service.
- **The CEA** is under the direct charge of the Minister of Finance. CEA enjoys rank and pay equivalent to that of a Secretary to Government of India. The CEA heads the Economic Division under the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).

NSCN(K) faction asks Centre to revive ceasefire

- **A breakaway faction** of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), led by Khango Konyak asks Centre to revive ceasefire. Recently NSCN(IM) cadre was killed – A hardcore cadre of the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muivah) was killed in an encounter with security forces in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **About National Socialist Council of Nagaland** NSCN is a Greater Naga Revolutionist, Christian Naga nationalist insurgent group operating mainly in Northeast India, with minor activities in northwest Myanmar until 2012.

- **The main goal of the organisation** is to establish a sovereign Naga state, "Nagalim", which would consist of all the areas inhabited by the Naga people in Northeast India and Northwest Myanmar. According to the NSCN manifesto, their slogan is "Nagaland for Christ". The group is accused of kidnapping, assassination, forced conversion and committing terrorist activities.
- **Do you know?** Two major factions of NSCN include NSCN (K), led by Khaplang; and NSCN (I-M), led by Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muviah.
- **On November 6, 2015** in response to an attack on an army convoy in Manipur India designated The NSCN (K) a terrorist organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

GM crops are considered to be a failure.

- **GM crops such as Bt cotton**, the stalled Bt brinjal as well as DMH-11, a transgenic mustard hybrid – has failed as a sustainable agriculture technology and has, therefore, also failed to provide livelihood security for cotton farmers who are mainly resource-poor, small and marginal farmers. It raised questions on the genetic engineering technology itself on the grounds that it raises the cost of sowing.
- **Prof. Swaminathan**, credited with leading India's Green Revolution, has in recent years advocated 'sustainable agriculture' and said the government should only use genetic engineering as a last resort.
- **Swaminathan** emphasised that genetic engineering technology is supplementary and must be needbased. Only in very rare circumstance (less than 1%) may there arise a need for the use of this technology.
- **However, the research paper** – 'Modern Technologies for Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security' – was criticised by India's Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA), K. VijayRaghavan as 'deeply flawed'.

Sri Brihadeeswarar temple, Thanjavur

- **HC stays Art of Living** event at Sri Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The iconic Great temple was over 1,000 years old and by allowing private parties to put up temporary structures within its premises, the authorities were showing no regard for heritage.
- **About Sri Brihadeeswarar temple** It is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva located in Thanjavur in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is also known as Periya Kovil (Great Temple), RajaRajeswara Temple and Rajarajeswaram.
- **It is one of the largest temples** in India and is an example of Dravidian architecture during the Chola period. Built by emperor Raja Raja Chola I and completed in 1010 AD, the temple turned 1000 years old in 2010.
- **The temple** is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the "Great Living Chola Temples", with the other two being the Brihadeeswarar Temple, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Airavatesvara temple.

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A POLARISING AGENT

- **Ideal Purpose of Social Media** To promote 3Ds: discussion, debate and dissent among members of societies. It helps in making an informed society. It should help in reducing inherent bias among people on various issues. It should make people more receptive to others' viewpoints, beliefs and opinions. Thus, effectively it should promote harmony, brotherhood and tolerance in the society.
- **What has social media done?** Rather than achieving the above mentioned goals, social media has hardened people's beliefs views and opinion and has made people more conservative in their outlook. This process of moulding people's opinion has been achieved by social media through a concept known as "Echo chamber Phenomena".

- **Social Media uses algorithms** where; it suggests whom to follow, posts and comments consistent with our views and Filter news based on views and opinions.
- **These algorithms** when used repeatedly by social media companies creates a cyclical rhythm of views which when bombarded regularly, helps in creating an effect similar to echo of a sound.
- **This “Echo chamber Phenomena”** has been used by various agencies to fulfill their interest which has further helped in hardening of people’s beliefs, views and opinions. Apart from this, the social media also impacts the individual behaviour which could be understood by Asch conformity experiment.
- **Do you know?** Asch Conformity Experiment As per the Asch Conformity Experiment people gave wrong answers (knowingly) to confirm their alignment with the majority because according to them the majority viewpoint is correct.
- **This phenomenon** of confirming with majority has helped in increasing acceptance of fake news to be as true.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ENABLER

- **Inclusive and participative tool of governance** Social media is inclusive, participative and Disruptive in a positive way. Inclusive: as it provides equal opportunity to all without discrimination or bias. It provides for a inclusive framework for all the people to to express their viewpoints and opinions.
- **Participative:** It promotes good governance in India, because it enables the government to engage with its citizens. At the same time it enables the citizens to put forward their concerns before the government. Thus it leads to strengthening of Democracy in India.
- **Disruptive:** The social media has also been used for mass mobilisation campaigns, for example, during the Arab Spring, #MeToo campaign and disaster management.
- **Social media** if used effectively, can further good governance initiatives of the government through people’s participation.
- **Tool of persuasion** Aristotle gave three modes of persuasion: Ethos(Credibility), Pathos(emotional appeal) and Logos(logic). People believe credible person or medium or they would believe if theres an emotional appeal or they will believe if there is logic and rationality in an argument.
- **Thus,** ability to persuade people depends on these three factors, and social media can play utmost a persuasive tool. It is wrong to blame the mushrooming growth of social media as it is the people who feed information as per their beliefs and opinion.
- **Conclusion** Improper use of social media has dented our secular fabric. It is now our duty to use social media in responsible manner. In order to make social media more effective, it’s the people who must understand their responsibility towards society rather than believing and spreading fake news which can cause hatred and promote divisiveness in the society.
- **And on part of government;** it should enact laws for data privacy and protection so that no other Cambridge Analytica will ever happen.

Shielding witnesses: on protection scheme

- **Introduction** The Supreme Court of India has ordered all states and union territories to implement the Draft Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 framed by the Centre in consultation with the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).
- **The scheme intends** to protect witnesses in criminal trials from threat, intimidation and undue influence. Witnesses turning hostile are a major reason for most acquittals in criminal cases.
- **In the present system,** there is little incentive for witnesses to turn up in court and testify against criminals. Threats to their lives, hostility and harassment while attending courts makes extremely difficult for the witness to give evidence in Court of law.
- **Moreover,** the need to protect witnesses has been emphasised by Law Commission reports and court judgments for years.
- **About Scheme** It broadly classifies witnesses in need of protection into three types based on the threat assessment. A witness protection order will be passed by a competent authority. The scheme is to be funded by budgetary support from State governments and donations. This is at variance with the Law Commission’s recommendation in 2006 that the Centre and the States share the cost equally.

- **Basic Features & Challenges** The Basic features such as in camera trial, proximate physical protection and removing identity details of testimony and references to witnesses in the records can be easily implemented.
- **However**, advanced forms of identity protection: giving witnesses a new identity, address and even 'parentage', with matching documents will be the real challenge in terms of witness protection. The implementation of the Witness Protection Scheme will face logistical and financial challenge which both the Centre and states need to fix together.

Aims and Objectives of Draft Witness Protection Scheme, 2018

- **The ability of a witness to give testimony** in a judicial setting or to cooperate with law enforcement and investigations without fear of intimidation or reprisal is essential in maintaining the rule of law.
- **The objective of this Scheme** is to ensure that the investigation, prosecution and trial of criminal offences is not prejudiced because witnesses are intimidated or frightened to give evidence without protection from violent or other criminal recrimination.
- **It aims to promote law enforcement** by facilitating the protection of persons who are involved directly or indirectly in providing assistance to criminal law enforcement agencies and overall administration of Justice.
- **Witnesses need** to be given the confidence to come forward to assist law enforcement and Judicial Authorities with full assurance of safety. It is aimed to identify series of measures that may be adopted to safeguard witnesses and their family members from intimidation and threats against their lives, reputation and property.
- **As such witnesses** should be entitled to the following rights: Right to give evidence anonymously Right to protection from intimidation and harm Right to be treated with dignity and compassion and respect of privacy Right to information of the status of the investigation and prosecution of the crime. Right to secure waiting place while at Court proceedings Right to transportation and lodging arrangements. Steps taken to protect witnesses and way forward
- **There have been ad hoc steps** such as those outlined for concealing the identity of witnesses in anti-terrorism and child-centric laws. A few dedicated courtrooms for vulnerable witnesses, mostly child victims, are also functional. However, expanding such facilities and implementing a comprehensive and credible witness protection programme will pose logistical and financial challenges. It will be well worth the effort, as the scheme could help strengthen India's tottering criminal justice system.



About SAFAR

- **SAFAR envisages** a research based management system where strategies of air pollution mitigation go hand in hand with nation's economic development to target a win-win scenario.
- **Through SAFAR know the City Air Quality-** Over all city pollution and Location specific Air Quality- A relative contribution of different environments in a city
- **Under the plan scheme "Metropolitan Advisories for Cities for Sports, Tourism (Metropolitan Air Quality and Weather Services), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Govt. of India,** has introduced a major national initiative, "System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research" known as "SAFAR" for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location specific information on air quality in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India.
- **It has been combined** with the early warning system on weather parameters. The SAFAR system is developed by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, along with ESSO partner institutions namely India Meteorological Department (IMD) and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF).
- **The implementation of SAFAR** is made possible with an active collaboration with local municipal corporations and various local educational institutions and governmental agencies in that Metro city.
- **The ultimate objective** of the project is to increase awareness among general public regarding the air quality in their city well in advance so that appropriate mitigation measures and systematic action can be taken up for betterment of air quality and related health issues.
- **It engineers awareness drive** by educating public, prompting self-mitigation and also to help develop mitigation strategies for policy makers.
- **The SAFAR observational network** of Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS) and Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) established within city limits represents selected microenvironments of the city including industrial, residential, background/ cleaner, urban complex, agricultural zones etc. as per international guidelines which ensures the true representation of city environment.
- **Air Quality indicators are monitored** at about 3 m height from the ground with online sophisticated instruments. These instruments are operated round the clock and data is recorded and stored at every 5 minute interval for quality check and further analysis.
- **Pollutants monitored:** PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), VOC's, Benzene, Mercury
- **Monitored Meteorological Parameters:** UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation

METNET Policy

- **The Intra-IMD Portal 'METNET'** is now a fully operational website. It contains some very sensitive data like the Service Records of the employees, metadata of the observatories, payment and leave details, circulars and orders issued by establishments, IT inventories, appointments at DGM Secretariat, and much more.
- **It may be noted** that all these information are available on the globally accessed internet, not on the dedicated intra-IMD network at present, which seems to be vulnerable to the hacking, virus infection, etc.
- **Considering the sensitivity** of the data and information involved the security of the Server, scalability and maintainability of the system, the competent authority has approved the following 'METNET Policy':

- **1) All packages on the portal** should conform to unified properties in respect of Logins by Sections and Individuals with unique username & password. This is essential for user-friendliness of the system. Similarly a common standard naming policy is required for databases, tables and files to improve scalability and maintainability.
- **2) The authority of Website** and Database Administrators has been assigned to the designated Officers of ISSD. All developers who wish to implement their package on the METNET should approach these administrators for the same. Individual programmers are not authorised to create database directly and host the files on the server without being scrutinised and checked.
- **3) Packages developed by anybody** in IMD can be hosted on METNET. However, they should be forwarded to IT Unit, which will review the feasibility, compatibility and applicability of the application at appropriate level and host them with the approval of the competent authority.
- **4) Administrators will be maintaining** the database of the projects and their developers, which can be viewed by all the authorised users. Individual programmers should not publish their names in their packages.
- **5) All correspondence related to METNET data**, packages and usage may be addressed by the users and developers to single e-mail contact of IT Unit (metnet.imdhq@imd.gov.in).
- **6) Administrators at HQ only** will be responsible for the maintenance and backup arrangements of the complete system.
- **7) Administrators** shall keep the log of access on the server and keep the passwords etc. in written form as confidential at a place, where it can be retrieved as a disaster recovery measure.

Year End Review 2018 – MNRE

- **India attains global 4th and 5th positions** in wind and solar power installed capacities; India now at 5th global position for overall installed renewable energy capacity
- **A total of 101.83 billion** units of power were generated in the country during the year 2017-18 from renewable energy
- **The Government has declared** the trajectory of bidding 60 GW capacity of solar energy and 20 GW capacity of wind energy by March 2020, leaving two years' time for execution of projects.
- **Keeping in view our commitment** to a healthy planet and our Nationally Determined Contributions as per the Paris Accord on Climate Change, India made a pledge that by 2030, 40% of installed power generation capacity shall be based on clean sources, it was determined that 175 GW of renewable energy capacity will be installed by 2022. This includes 100 GW from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro power.
- **The substantial higher capacity target** will ensure greater energy security, improved energy access and enhanced employment opportunities. With the accomplishment of this ambitious target, India will become one of the largest Green Energy producers in the world, even surpassing several developed countries

Grid Connected Solar Power Projects

- **The Government** has revised the target of Grid Connected Solar Power Projects from 20,000 MW by the year 2021-22 to 100,000 MW by the year 2021-22 under the National Solar Mission.
- **The country** currently has the fifth highest solar installed capacity in the world with total installed capacity of 24.33 GW as on October, 2018 against a target of 100 GW by 2022. Further, 22.8 GW capacity is under implementation or have been tendered out.
- **The Ministry plans** to bid out remaining solar power capacity in 2018-19 and 2019-20, so that bidding gets completed for entire 100 GW capacity additions by March 2020, leaving two years' time for execution of projects.
- **The tariff for grid-connected solar power** projects is determined through competitive bidding process involving reverse e-auction.

- **This has helped** in bringing down the tariff significantly. The lowest solar tariff discovered as on date is Rs. 2.44/kWh in July 2018 in ISTS based bidding of solar projects in India. The solar tariff has come down from around Rs 18/kWh in 2010 to Rs. 2.44/kWh in 2018 due to various factors like economies of scale, assured availability of land and power evacuation systems etc.
- **Solar Parks** are being set up in the country. 47 solar parks of aggregate capacity 26,694 MW has been approved in 21 States up to November, 2018. Over 1,00,000 lakh acres of land identified for various solar parks out of which over 75,000 acres have been acquired. Solar projects of aggregate capacity 4195 MW have been commissioned inside various solar parks.
- **The Ministry** is also taking up projects for new emerging technologies such as floating solar power.

WIND ENERGY

- **The country currently** has the fourth highest wind installed capacity in the world with total installed capacity of 34.98 GW as on October, 2018 against a target of 60 GW by 2022. Further, around 9.4 GW capacity is under implementation or have been tendered out.
- **The Ministry plans** to bid out 10 GW wind power capacity each year for 2018-19 and 2019-20, so that bidding gets completed for entire 60 GW capacity additions by March 2020, leaving two years' time for execution of projects.
- **The recent assessment** conducted by National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) indicates a gross wind power potential of 302 GW in the country at 100 meter above ground level.
- **The capacity additions** till 2017 were through Feed in Tariff (FiT) mechanism. Subsequently, the tariff regime has been shifted from Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) to bidding route.
- **The Government has issued 'Guidelines for Tariff Based Competitive Bidding Process for Procurement of Power from Grid Connected Wind Power Projects'**, vide Resolution notified on 8th December, 2017, with an objective to provide a framework for procurement of wind power through a transparent process of bidding. This has resulted in discovery of lowest ever tariff for wind power.
- **The National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy** was issued in May 2018. The main objective of the policy is to provide a framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid system for optimal and efficient utilization of wind and solar resources, transmission infrastructure and land. The wind - solar PV hybrid systems will help in reducing the variability in renewable power generation and achieving better grid stability. A bid for setting up of first 1200 MW Greenfield wind solar hybrid project was floated by SECI.
- **The National Offshore wind energy** policy was notified in October 2015 with an objective to develop the offshore wind energy in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) along the Indian coastline.
- **Initial studies** carried out by NIWE indicate offshore wind energy potential off the coasts Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
- **LiDAR was commissioned** on the monopile platform in November 2017 at Gulf of Khambhat, off Gujarat coast for wind resource assessment.
- **NIWE floated Expression of Interest (EoI)** for establishment of 1 GW offshore wind farm in Gulf of Khambhat region off Gujarat coast. 35 parties (both national and international) showed interest.
- **National targets** for offshore wind capacity additions of 5 GW by 2022 and 30 by 2030 declared.
- **The expansion of the wind industry** has resulted in a strong ecosystem, project operation capabilities and a manufacturing base. State-of-the-art technologies are now available in the country for the manufacture of wind turbines.
- **All the major global players** in this field have their presence in the country.
- **Over 24 different models** of wind turbines are being manufactured by more than 12 different companies in India.
- **Wind turbines and components** are being exported to the US, Australia, Europe, Brazil and other Asian countries. Around 70-80% indigenization has been achieved with strong domestic manufacturing in the wind sector.

BIO POWER

- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has been promoting programmes to promote Biomass Power and Bagasse Cogeneration in the country with an objective to utilize country's available biomass resources like bagasse, rice husk, straw, cotton stalk, coconut shells etc. for power generation.
- **Waste to Energy projects** are also being set up for generation of Energy from Urban, Industrial and Agricultural Waste / Residues such as municipal solid wastes, vegetable and other market wastes, slaughterhouse waste, agricultural residues and industrial wastes & effluents.
- **A total capacity of 9.54 GW of grid** connected bio-power has been installed in the country as on October 2018 against a target of 10 GW bio-power by 2022. This includes 8.73 GW from bagasse cogeneration, 0.68 GW from non-bagasse cogeneration and 0.13 GW from waste to energy.

SMALL HYDRO POWER

- **A total capacity** of 4.5 GW of grid connected small hydro power has been installed in the country as on October 2018 against a target of 5 GW small hydro power by 2022. Further, 126 no. of projects of capacity 0.73 GW are under various stages of implementation.

ENERGY STORAGE

- **Energy Storage** is one of the crucial & critical components of India's energy infrastructure strategy and also for supporting India's sustained thrust to renewables and electric mobility.
- **With an objective** to strive towards leadership in the energy storage sector by creating an enabling policy and regulatory framework, a comprehensive National Energy Storage Mission (NESM) has been developed.
- **The Mission** focuses on demand creation, indigenous manufacturing, innovation and necessary policy support for proliferation of Energy Storage in the country.

OFF-GRID RENEWABLES

- **The Ministry is implementing off grid** and Decentralized renewables programme for meeting energy demand for cooking, lighting, motive power, space heating, hot water generation, etc.
- **The Ministry** also supports deployment of decentralized solar applications like solar lanterns, solar street lights, solar home lights, solar pumps, etc. in the country.
- **As on October, 2018**, over 40 Lakhs no. of Lantern & Lamps, 16.72 lakhs no. of Home Lights, 6.40 lakhs no. of Street Lights, 1.96 lakhs no. of solar pumps and 187.99MWp Stand Alone has been installed in the country.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- **The MNRE** has decided to scale-up its RD&D effort to Technology Development and Innovation Programme.

- **The focus** is on promoting application oriented innovation, integrated with research and development for commercial applications and testing and standardization for quality and reliability assurance in renewable energy sector.
- **A Technology Development and Innovation Policy (TDIP)** is also being finalised.
- **It is based on a robust ecosystem** for support for research, innovation and validation for technology development and demonstration, testing and standardization, awards for innovation linked with start-ups.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- **As part of HRD programme of the Ministry**, a robust RE education and training system is developed. SPV lighting systems, Solar Thermal systems, SHP have been incorporated in the regular syllabus of 2 years certificate programme for seven trades i.e Electronics, Electrician, Machinist, Welder, Carpenter, Fitter and Plumber.
- **Course modules and Modular Employable Skilling programme (MES)** of NCVT have been developed. Parallely, through Sector Skill Council of Green Jobs NOSS/QPs have been developed for various job roles in Renewable Energy sectors and regular training programmes are being organised for these job roles with the support of MNRE or MSDE as per National Skill Development Policy 2015.
- **2nd Global Re-Invest Renewable Energy Investors' Meet and Expo (2nd Re-Invest)** The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy hosted the First Assembly of International Solar Alliance (ISA), 2nd Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Energy Ministerial Meet and 2nd Global RE-Invest Meet & Expo from 3rd to 5th October 2018 at the India Expo Mart, Greater Noida.
- **The three-day event** saw participation of over 20,000 delegates including representatives of over 77 countries out of which 40 were at ministerial level.
- **This Meeting provided** a platform for experts to discuss energy needs within the region, identification of hurdles in cooperation and coordination among concerned agencies. The event also witnessed the cementing of ties between the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and ISA in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- **The International Solar Alliance (ISA)** became first international intergovernmental organization headquartered in India on 6th December, 2017. ISA is part of India's vision to provide clean and affordable energy to all. So far 71 countries have signed the Framework Agreement of the ISA. Out of these, 48 countries have ratified the same.
- **The First Assembly of the ISA** was held on 3 October, 2018 in India. 37 ISA member Countries, including India and France, attended the Assembly. In addition, 25 countries that have signed the Framework Agreement of ISA but yet to ratify; 13 Prospective Member countries that are yet sign the Framework Agreement of the ISA; and 3 Partner countries that are beyond inter-tropical zone attended the Assembly as Observers.
- **In the First Assembly** inter-alia India's resolution for amending the Framework Agreement of the ISA for opening up the ISA membership to all countries that are members of United Nations was adopted.
- **India has recognized ISA's judicial personality** by entering into Headquarter agreement with ISA.



Heritage Park for Hindus, Buddhists in Elum Valley in Pak

- **Under the project**, the Elum Valley would be made a safe abode for the followers of Hinduism and Buddhism and as well as for tourists visiting the heritage park.
- **Under the project**, fencing of the entire Elum Valley would be done and a separate track would be constructed in the heritage park.
- **Elum Valley and its significance**: Elum Valley is located between the Swat and Buner districts in the province, Elum Valley has been a site of divinity and pilgrimage for both the Hindu and the Buddhist communities.
- **According to Hindu belief**, Lord Ram spent time meditating there during his 14 years of exile, while Buddhists believe it to be the site where a previous incarnation of Lord Buddha gave up his life.

Karmapa now a Dominican citizen

- **About Karma Kagyu school**: The Karma Kagyu lineage belongs to one of the 4 main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. As a lineage of direct oral transmission it places particular emphasis on meditation and the realization of the direct experience of mind gained through the guidance of a teacher.
- **The Karma Kagyu** lineage has its roots in the teachings of the historical Buddha and developed into a practical way to enlightenment in India and Tibet.
- **For over a 1000 years** Buddhist Masters (Mahasiddhas) such as Naropa and Maitripa in India as well as the famous Tibetan Yogis Marpa and Milarepa shaped the lineage as a practical everyday practice for lay people.
- **Karmapa**: Since the 12th century the Karmapas have been the heads of the Karma Kagyu lineage and responsible for the continuation of this direct transmission lineage.

39th GCC summit and Riyadh declaration

- **The 40th session** of the GCC summit will be held in the UAE, according to a communique issued at the end of the 39th summit in Riyadh.
- **What is GCC?** The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a political and economic alliance of six countries in the Arabian Peninsula: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Established in 1981**, the GCC promotes economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the six states and holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.
- **All current member states are monarchies**, including three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), two absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and one federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates).

- **Structure:** The GCC comprises six main branches that carry out various tasks, from the preparation of meetings to the implementation of policies. They are- Supreme Council, Ministerial Council, Secretariat-General, Consultative Commission, Commission for the Settlement of Disputes and the Secretary-General.
- **Role of GCC today:** Whether the GCC still has a relevant function and role in the region is questionable. Though it was created for the purpose of solidifying union ranks, the blockade imposed on Qatar by its neighbours has largely annulled these principles.
- **The Gulf states** have in the past differed in their views on several issues that have unfolded in the region over the past two decades. The role of the GCC has also been diminishing ever since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, with the six states illustrating various approaches to the war and its consequences. This has been enhanced during the wave of protests that swept the Middle East in 2011, known as the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia has gained a dominant role within the GCC today.

Maldives has applied to rejoin Commonwealth

- **Background:** Two years ago, the country's former leader Yameen withdrew the Maldives from the Commonwealth after it mounted pressure on him to protect human rights and ensure the rule of law amid a ferocious crackdown on dissent.
- **About Commonwealth of Nations** The Commonwealth of Nations, at one time known as British Commonwealth, is an organisation of fifty three states that were principally below the colonial rule of British Government. They came into existence with the proclamation of sovereignty of the state from the colonial rule of British Empire and were later given self-governance.
- **It proclaims** that the Commonwealth nations are "free and equal." The insignia of this Commonwealth Association is Queen Elizabeth II who is considered the Supreme of the Commonwealth nations.
- **The member states** of the commonwealth are not legally liable or bound to each other. They are rather united by language, history, culture, likeness of the democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
- **Their values** are listed down within the Commonwealth Charter and the hands of harmony towards the member states are extended by the Commonwealth Games held every four years. Former British mandates that did not become members of the Commonwealth are Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, British Palestine, Sudan, British Somaliland, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Key facts:** Former name — British Commonwealth. Composition: intergovernmental organisation of 53 member states that are mostly former territories of the British Empire.
- **It operates by intergovernmental consensus of the member states.** Established in 1949 by the London Declaration. Structure: Head of the Commonwealth — Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth. The position is symbolic.

Amendments to the Citizenship Rules, 2009

- **Changes:** The amendments seek to include a separate column in the citizenship form for applicants belonging to six minority communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.
- **Under the amendments**, a separate entry in the form will ask the applicant: "Do you belong to one of the minority communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Sikhs and Christians?"
- **What necessitated this?** The contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, is pending in Parliament. A parliamentary committee has been examining the Bill. It has run into strong resistance in Assam because it will pave the way for giving citizenship mostly to illegal Hindu migrants from Bangladesh in Assam, who came after March 1971, in violation of the 1985 Assam Accord.
- **What is the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016?** The Citizenship Amendment Bill was proposed in Lok Sabha on July 19, amending the Citizenship Act of 1955. If this Bill is passed in Parliament, illegal migrants from certain minority communities coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan will then be eligible for Indian citizenship.
- **In short, illegal migrants** belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian religious communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan would not be imprisoned or deported. Moreover, these citizens gain permanent citizenship after six years of residency in India instead of 11 years — as mentioned in the Citizenship Act (1955). The registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may get cancelled if they violate any law.

- **What is the Citizenship Act 1995?** Under Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen. Citizenship by descent: Persons born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, are citizens of India by descent if their father was a citizen of India at the time of their birth.
- **From December 3, 2004**, onwards, persons born outside of India shall not be considered citizens of India unless their birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the date of birth. In Section 8 of the Citizenship Act 1955, if an adult makes a declaration of renunciation of Indian citizenship, he loses Indian citizenship.
- **Who is an illegal immigrant?** According to the Citizenship Act (1955), an illegal immigrant is defined as a person who enters India without a valid passport or stays in the country after the expiry of the visa permit. Also, the immigrant who uses false documents for the immigration process.
- **What are the guidelines to become an Indian citizenship?** Citizenship is granted to an individual by the government of the country when he/she complies with the legal formalities, so it's like a judicial concept.
- **In India, the Citizenship Act, 1995** prescribes five ways of acquiring citizenship:

- Birth
 - Descent
 - Registration
 - Naturalization
 - Incorporation of the territory.

Bioplastics not an eco-friendly alternative to plastic- Study

- **Main findings of the study?** Bioplastics — often promoted as a climate-friendly alternative to petroleum-based plastics — may lead to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.
- **But, how?** Bioplastics are in principle climate-neutral since they are based on renewable raw materials such as maize, wheat or sugar cane. These plants get the CO₂ that they need from the air through their leaves. Producing bioplastics therefore consumes CO₂, which compensates for the amount that is later released at end-of-life. Overall, their net greenhouse gas balance is assumed to be zero. Bioplastics are thus often consumed as an environmentally friendly alternative.
- **However**, at least with the current level of technology, this issue is probably not as clear as often assumed. This is because the production of bioplastics in large amounts would change land use globally. This could potentially lead to an increase in the conversion of forest areas to arable land. However, forests absorb considerably more CO₂ than maize or sugar cane annually, if only because of their larger biomass.
- **Concerns over the increased use of plastics:** Plastics are usually made from petroleum, with the associated impacts in terms of fossil fuel depletion but also climate change. The carbon embodied in fossil resources is suddenly released to the atmosphere by degradation or burning, hence contributing to global warming.
- **This corresponds** to about 400 million metric tonnes of CO₂ per year worldwide, almost half of the total greenhouse gases that Germany emitted to the atmosphere in 2017. It is estimated that by 2050, plastics could already be responsible for 15% of the global CO₂ emissions.
- **Main advantages of bioplastics:** They can reduce our carbon footprint. Less consumption of non-renewable raw materials. A reduction of non-biodegradable waste, which contaminates the environment. Increased energy savings in terms of production. Fewer harmful additives such as phthalates or bisphenol A. No adverse change to flavour or scent in food stored in bioplastic containers.

Ex Avaiandra 2018

- **Ex AVAIANDRA**, a service specific exercise between Indian Air Force and Russian Federation Aerospace Force (RFSAF) is planned at Air Force Station Jodhpur.

- **AVIANDIRA-2018:** Exercise Aviaindra is an Air Force level exercise between India and the Russian Federation. First Aviaindra was conducted in 2014, planned as a bi-annual exercise. AVIANDIRA-2018 is the second in the series of bilateral joint exercise between IAF-RFSAF (the exercise is unique, where the foreign participants does not bring its assets).
- **Aim of the Exercise:** The aim of the exercise is focused towards anti-terrorist operations in a bi-lateral scenario. This further enhances the co-operation and understanding each other's Concept of Operations.
- **Background:** Russia has been a major partner of India in the defence sector and the cooperation has been steadily growing further. In October 2017, India and Russia held a 10-day mega war game involving their armies, navies and air forces for the first time ramp up military ties.
- **The exercise Indra,** which took place in Russia, primarily focused on achieving coordination between forces of the two countries in tri-services integrated theatre command scenario. It was the first time, India participated in tri-services exercise with a foreign country with large scale participation by the Navy, the Army and the Air Force.

1st International Conference on Sustainable Water Management at Mohali

- **The first International Conference** under the aegis of National Hydrology Project, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation is being organized by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) at Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali on the theme 'Sustainable Water Management'.
- **Aims of the Conference:** To foster the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders, including governments, the scientific and academic communities, so as to promote sustainable policies for water management
- **To create awareness** of water-related problems, motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.
- **The main aim is to bring advancement** in water management system to further reduce flood and draughts all over the Globe.

Khelo India Youth Games

- **After the first edition** of the Khelo India School Games 2017, the second edition, the games has become an initiative of the Central Government, has expanded in its scope, and will allow participants to compete in two categories (under 17 and under 21).
- **About Khelo India –** The Khelo India programme has been introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports in India and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- **To accomplish the above objectives,** Khelo India programme has been divided into 12 verticals, namely: Play Field Development Community Coaching Development State Level Khelo India Centres Annual Sports Competition Talent Search and Development
- **Utilization and Creation/Upgradation of Sports Infrastructure** Support to National/Regional/State Sports Academics Physical fitness of school children Sports for Women Promotion of sports amongst people with disabilities Sports for Peace and Development Promotion of rural and indigenous/tribal games
- **Talented players** identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.
- **Khelo India School Games are a part of the Khelo India programme.** There are 16 disciplines as follows: Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

India's tallest bridge pier built in Noney, Manipur:

- **What is it?** The Northeast Frontier Railway Construction Organization has constructed India's tallest pier as part of the project to build a railway bridge at Noney in Manipur. The proposed bridge will be the world's tallest railway bridge.
- **Key facts:** The bridge is being constructed across the valley of river Ijai near Noney, with the height of the final pier being 141 metres. The total length of the Noney bridge will be 703 metres.
- **On completion**, the bridge will surpass the existing world record, held by the 139-metre Mala-Rijeka viaduct in Montenegro.
- **The bridge is a part** of the 111-km Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal new broad gauge line project, a national project which is set to be completed by 2022. The project also includes 45 tunnels, the longest being 10.28 km, which will be the longest railway tunnel of the northeast.



To connect with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), an online portal “ENSURE” has been launched

- **The portal** will provide a very simple, useful and transparent system to the beneficiary
- **Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** Shri Radha Mohan Singh launched a portal ENSURE- National Livestock Mission-EDEG developed by NABARD and operated under the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries today. On this occasion, he informed that the National Livestock Mission has been conceived by Modi government for the sustainable development of the livestock sector.
- **Under the Mission's component** called Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation (EDEG), subsidy payment for activities related to poultry, small ruminants, pigs etc. through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) goes directly to the beneficiary's account. In order to make it better, simpler and transparent, the NABARD has developed an online portal “ENSURE” (<https://ensure.nabard.org>) so that the information related to beneficiary and processing of application can be made readily available.
- **Shri Singh added that under the new process**, controlling officer/branch manager of the bank, after scrutinizing & sanctioning of proposal, uploads the subsidy claims in the portal. The subsidy will be approved within 30 days from the date of sanction of loan. Earlier, even after the loan approval, subsidy took a long time to reach the beneficiary's account. Through this process, the flow of information/funds will also be quicker and more accountable. The burden of extra interest due to delay in the disbursal of the subsidy would now be reduced after the launch of the portal. Access from the portal will also be on real-time basis and list of beneficiaries can be easily prepared.

Indian Ports Association Launches 'PCS 1x' to Increase Ease of Doing Business

- **Indian Ports Association (IPA)**, under the guidance of Ministry of Shipping launched the Port Community System 'PCS1x'. The url www.indianpcs.gov.in was launched by Shri Sanjay Bhatia, Chairman IPA in the presence of various stakeholders from Mumbai today. It was attended by all Major Port Chairmen through video conference. Shri Bhatia, while launching the portal lauded the effort of all involved for completion of the project in record time of 6 months.
- **'PCS 1x' is a cloud based** new generation technology, with user-friendly interface. This system seamlessly integrates 8 new stakeholders besides the 19 existing stakeholders from the maritime trade on a single platform.
- **The platform offers value added services** such as notification engine, workflow, mobile application, track and trace, better user interface, better security features, improved inclusion by offering dashboard for those with no IT capability. A unique feature of 'PCS1x' is that it can latch on to third party software which provides services to the maritime industry thereby enabling the stakeholders to access wide network of services. The system enables single sign on facility to provide one stop interface to all the functionalities across all stakeholders. Another major feature is the deployment of a world class state of the art payment aggregator solution which removes dependency on bank specific payment eco system.
- **This system will enable trade** to have an improved communication with the customs as they have also embarked on an Application Programming Interface (API) based architecture, thereby enabling real time interaction.
- **This System offers a database** that acts as a single data point to all transactions. It captures and stores data on its first occurrence thereby reducing manual intervention, the need to enter transaction data at various points and thereby reducing errors in the process. It is estimated that this feature alone will reduce 11/2 to 2 days in a life of transaction. The application will have a cascading effect in reducing dwell time and overall cost of transaction. The platform has the potential to revolutionize maritime trade in India and bring it at par with global best practices and pave the way to improve the Ease of Doing Business world ranking and Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranks.
- **A major training and outreach program** is under way to educate the stakeholders about the uses and benefits of 'PCS 1x'.
- **This system is also an initiative** that supports green initiatives by reducing dependency on paper. The web-based platform has been developed indigenously and is a part of the 'Make in India' and 'Digital India' initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

MORE POWER TO INDIA'S ETHNIC GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS (GI):

- **GI logo and tagline** have been launched by Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Suresh Prabhu for recognition of GIs in India. 312 GIs have been registered in past 1 year including famous GI like Bangla Rasgulla and Alphonso. It is one of the world's most popular fruit and is exported to countries like Japan and Korea and in Europe. New markets such as USA and Australia have recently opened up.
- **Alphonso from Ratnagiri**, Sindhudurg and other adjoining areas in Maharashtra gets GI Tag
- **Darjeeling Tea**, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and TirupatiLaddus are some of the GIs. The first product to get a GI tag in India was the Darjeeling tea in 2004. There are a total of 325 products from India that carry this indication.
- **A massive GI campaign** has been launched for increasing awareness of the GI. Farmers, artisans and craftsmen are the direct beneficiaries of this initiative.
- **GI products** can benefit the rural economy in remote areas, by supplementing the incomes of artisans, farmers, weavers and craftsmen. Our rural artisans possess unique skills and knowledge of traditional practices and methods, passed down from generation to generation, which need to be protected and promoted.

REFORMS FOR STRENGTHENING AND MODERNISING THE WTO:

- **The recent unilateral measures** and counter measures by some members, the deepening impasse regarding the appointment of members in the appellate body and contentious debate on development has led the Department of Commerce to propose major initiatives on WTO reforms like the enhanced role of the secretariat and strengthening of Dispute Settlement Mechanism which India has co-sponsored with EU. India desires for a more participatory engagement in the WTO with likeminded countries in order to defend India's interest.
- **RCEP: Second RCEP leaders' summit** was held on 14th November 2018, where leaders acknowledged substantial progress in the negotiations. During the RCEP Ministerial Round meeting on 12-13 November 2018, 3 more chapters were concluded, taking the total chapters successfully concluded so far to 7 out of 16.
- **As per Commerce Minister's directions**, 3 think-tanks are being engaged for undertaking comprehensive study on India's approach to RCEP. ICRIER, CRT and IIM (Bangalore) and CWTOS have been selected for the purpose.

THINK TANKS AND CONSULTATIONS:

- **High Level Advisory Group(HLAG):** A HLAG has been set up DoC to make recommendations on pursuing opportunities addressing challenges and finding a way forward amidst emergent issues in the contemporary global trade scenario.
- **The HLAG will consider ways** for boosting India's share and importance in global merchandise and services trade, managing pressing bilateral trade relations and mainstreaming new age policy making.
- **The terms of reference (ToR)** of the HLAG are to examine the prevailing international trade dynamics, including, but not confined to, the rising protectionist tendencies, especially on the part of major economies, non-engagement by some countries on outstanding trade negotiation issues and commitments, including the Doha Development Agenda, and their insistence on pursuing negotiating mandates, in many cases prematurely and without efforts, to build consensus and common understanding.
- **On new issues and in light** of this examination, the HLAG will suggest a way forward for India, taking into account its interests and sensitivities, and provide options for a balanced approach for the global community to build on achievements thus far, in creating a conducive global trade framework and move forward in a harmonious and consensual manner that is acceptable to the larger global community.
- **The Group may consider possible approaches** and suggest a pragmatic framework for India's future engagement in international trade, and the manner in which it can play a proactive and constructive role in working with the community of Nations in exploring and building consensus on resolving emergent trade related issues. The group has met five times since October 2018 and will submit its report to the Commerce Minister by the end of this year.

- **INDIAN INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN TRADE (IIFT):** IIFT is an autonomous public business school under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to help professionalize the country's foreign trade management and increase exports by developing human resources, generating, analyzing and disseminating data and conducting research.

Centre for WTO Studies:

- **The Centre for WTO Studies** was set up in the year 1999 to be a permanent repository of WTO negotiations-related knowledge and documentation. It was also envisaged that the Centre would evolve into a research unit with interest in trade in general and WTO in particular to finally develop into an independent think tank in the area.
- **Over the years, the Centre** has conducted a robust research programme with a series of papers in all spheres of interest at the WTO. It has also created a specialized e-repository of important WTO documents, especially related to India, in its Trade Resource Centre.
- **It has been regularly** called upon by the Government of India to undertake research and provide independent analytical inputs to help it develop positions in its various trade negotiations, both at the WTO and other forums such as Free and Preferential Trade Agreements and Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements.

Centre for Regional Trade (CRT):

- **CRT is an autonomous** Think-Tank established by the Department of Commerce under the Centre for Research on International Trade (CRIT) at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade.
- **It undertakes research** in economics with a focus on trade and investment related issues relevant to international cooperation of India with specific regions and countries, including Latin America, Africa, South Asia, ASEAN, China, EU, Japan, Korea and USA.

The Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL):

- **Established in the year 2016** by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) its primary objective is to provide sound and rigorous analysis of legal issues pertaining to international trade and investment law to the Government of India and other governmental agencies.
- **The Centre aims to create a dedicated pool** of legal experts that who could provide technical inputs for enhancing India's participation in international trade and investment negotiations and dispute settlement. The Centre also aims to be a thought leader in the various domains of international economic law such as WTO law, international investment law and legal issues relating to economic integration.

Quality Council of India:

- **Quality Council of India (QCI)** is a non-profit autonomous society registered under Societies Registration Act to establish an accreditation structure in the country and to spread quality movement in the country by undertaking a National Quality Campaign.
- **The QCI is engaged in coal quality testing**, assessment under Swachh Bharat Mission, Grievance analysis study and subsequent reform recommendations for the top 40 grievance receiving Ministries and Departments. The Council is also creating a dashboard to monitor quality of project implementation in CPSEs.

NEW INDUSTRIAL POLICY:

- **The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has initiated the process of formulation of a new Industrial Policy in May 2017 and may get Cabinet approval soon. This will replace the 27-year-old existing policy. Since the last Industrial Policy announced in 1991, India has transformed into one of the fastest growing economies in the world. With strong macro-economic fundamentals and several path breaking reforms in the last three years, India is equipped to deploy a different set of ideas and strategies to build a globally competitive Indian industry. The new Industrial Policy will subsume the National Manufacturing Policy.
- **A consultative approach was taken** for the formulation of the new policy wherein six thematic focus groups and an online survey on DIPP website have been used to obtain inputs from stakeholders. Focus groups, with members from government departments, industry associations, academia, and think tanks were setup to examine the challenges faced by the industry in specific areas. The six thematic areas include manufacturing and MSME, technology and innovation, Ease of Doing Business, infrastructure, investment, trade and fiscal policy, and skills and employability for the future. A Task Force on artificial intelligence for India's economic transformation was also been constituted to provide inputs for the policy.
- **It is proposed that the new Industrial Policy** will aim at making India a manufacturing hub by promoting Make in India. It will also suitably incorporate the use of modern smart technologies such as IOT, artificial intelligence and robotics for advanced manufacturing.
- **Ranking of States:** Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the World Bank conducts an annual reform exercise for all States and Union Territories (UTs) under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner. States and UTs have conducted reforms to ease their regulations and systems in areas like labour, environmental clearances, construction permits, contract enforcement, registering property and inspections. States have also enacted Public Service Delivery Guarantee Acts to enforce the timelines on registrations and approvals.
- **Improvement in Ease of Doing Business** ranking have been possible because of the transformative measures taken by the Government of India which includes legislative and regulatory reforms. To support start-ups and lower tax rates for MSMEs quicker environmental clearances from 600 days to 140 days has been implemented, abolition of inter-state check post after implementation of GST has been done, enhanced input tax credit and electronic GST network has been put in place and the creation of commercial courts to fast track enforcement of contracts and faster security clearances has lent support to the start-ups in the country.
- **India has improved its rank among BRICS** countries from 5th in 2010 to 3rd in 2018. The measures undertaken to ensure this improved ranking is issuance of construction permits where India's rank is 52, in getting electricity connection India's rank is 24 and in Trading Across Borders India now ranks at 84. In paying taxes India's ranking is 121 and in resolving insolvency India's ranking stands at 108.
- **Twenty-One regulatory changes** have been made for ease of doing business for start-ups.
- **To optimise resource utilisation** and enhance the efficiency of the manufacturing sector, DIPP launched the Industrial Information System (IIS), a GIS-enabled database of industrial areas and clusters across the country in May 2017. The portal serves as a one-stop solution to the free and easy accessibility of all industrial information including availability of raw material – agriculture, horticulture, minerals, natural resources, distance from key logistic nodes, layers of terrain and urban infrastructure.
- **IPRS is proposed to be translated** into an annual exercise covering all the parks across India. Coverage would be widened and updated to bring in deeper qualitative assessment feedback, bring in technological intervention and develop it as a tool that helps effectively for demand driven and need based interventions both by policy makers and investors.

District Level Development- Ushering progress one District at a time:

- **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion** of the Ministry of Commerce has also developed a District level reforms plan. It has been shared with the State and UT Governments for implementation by Districts. The State and UT Governments have been requested to evaluate districts on the basis of achievements in implementation of this plan on the basis of users' feedback.
- **With a focus on a bottom-up approach**, the Ministry has identified six districts across five states to build the capacity of the district level administration. Whilst National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has been given the mandate to work closely with the District Administration of Solan in Himachal Pradesh, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, IIM Lucknow is working closely with the District Administration of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Muzaffarpur in Bihar and Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The action-oriented plan will aim at increasing district level output by 3% with a focus on enhancing EODB at the district level which will give a massive boost to India's overall GDP growth.

- **FDI INNEW GROWTH TRAJECTORY:** Q1FY19 FDI inflows saw a 23% growth over Q1FY18 with Q1FY19 FDI inflow at USD 12.7 billion. India for the first time received FDI of more than highest ever FDI inflow of USD 61.96 billion in FY 2017-18. FDI equity inflows in automobiles & auto components increased by 13% during FY 2017-18, as compared to FY 2016-17. FDI equity inflows in textiles sector have increased by 18% during FY 2017-18, as compared to FY 2016-17.

MAKE IN INDIA

- **Launched by Prime Minister of India**, Narendra Modi, on 25th September 2014 to make India the hub of manufacturing, India has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies.
- **India has jumped 15 places on the Global Innovation Index (2015-16)** (Source: World Intellectual Property Organization) and moved 19 places ahead on the Logistics Performance Index (2015-16) (Source: World Bank).
- **In the Global Competitiveness Index (2014-16)** India has jumped 32 places (Source: World Economic Forum).
- **Ministry of Commerce** is making all efforts to ensure that in public procurement preference is given to Make in India:
- **Exemption is given where estimated value of procurement is less than Rs. 5 lakhs.** The minimum local content shall ordinarily be 50%. The Nodal Ministry may prescribe a higher or lower percentage in respect of any particular item and may also prescribe the manner of calculation of local content. The margin of purchase preference shall be 20%. A Standing Committee in Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, under the chairmanship of Secretary, DIPP oversee the implementation of the 2017 order giving preference to Make in India products.
- **So far, 14 Nodal Ministries** and Departments have issued notifications for minimum local content for various product categories. State Governments have been requested to implement Public Procurement Order in their States. Implementation of the Order is being monitored vigorously. A Public Procurement Cell has been created in DIPP. Regular meetings of the Standing Committee are being held, apart from industry-specific meetings to sensitise and take feedback from industry.
- **Purchasing Managers' Index signals a sparkling continuous expansion:** Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of business activity both in the manufacturing and services sectors. PMI in October 2018 stood at 53.1 as against 50.3 in October 2017. October 2018 is the 15th consecutive month of PMI>50, indicating growth in the manufacturing sector.
- **Massive growth of Start-ups:** Start-up India is a flagship initiative of the Government of India, intended to build a strong ecosystem that is conducive for the growth of start-up businesses, to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities. The Government through this initiative aims to empower start-ups to grow through innovation and design.
- **The number of DIPP** recognised start-ups touched 14,545 in November 18 as compared to 4610 on October 2017 generating total employment for 130,424 persons.
- **Several programmes** have been undertaken since the launch of the initiative on 16th of January, 2016 by Prime Minister, to transform India into a country of job creators instead of job seekers.
- **The 19-Point Start-up India Action Plan** envisages several incubation centres, easier patent filing, tax exemptions, ease of setting-up of business, a Rs. 10,000 crore corpus fund and a faster exit mechanism.
- **Some of the achievements of the Start-up India action plan are** (i) simplification and handholding for compliance regime based on self-certification, rolling out of mobile app and portal, setting up of Start-up India hub, legal support and fast-tracking patent examination at lower costs, relaxed norms of public procurement for start-ups and faster exit for start-ups, (ii) providing funding support through fund of funds with a corpus of Rs. 10,000 crore, tax exemption on capital gains, tax exemption to start-ups for 3 years, removal of angel tax, (iii) promoting industry-academia partnership and incubation through launch of Atal Innovation Mission, harnessing private sector expertise for incubator setup, building 11 Technology Business Incubators, setting up of 7 new research parks modelled on the research park setup at IIT Madras, promoting start-ups in the biotechnology sectors and (iv) launching of innovation focused programmes for students.
- **Support and outreach campaign for MSMEs by Department of Commerce (DoC):** Due to the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce, interest subvention was enhanced by 2% for MSMEs and an exhibition on GeM and export promotion schemes was set up by DoC in 80 districts on 2nd November 2018 which was attended by nodal officers appointed by DoC from DGFT and GeM.
- **Department of Commerce** has identified the following deliverables for MSMEs: Ease of access to markets by bringing MSMEs on GeM platform and procurement from MSMEs via GeM, Quality certification by quality control of India to MSMEs products and districts identified for sectoral intervention so that MSMEs or rubber in Kottayam, gems and jewellery in Cuttack and Hyderabad and large cardamom plantations in West Sikkim are incentivised.
- **Further benefits of DGFT export** promotion schemes are to be extended to MSMEs like MEIS, AA, EPCG, DFIA and interest equalisation. New exporters will be trained and guided on how to export and IOEC registration and workshops will be conducted for MSMEs on export opportunities under the FTA route and familiarization with portals like the FIEO managed India Trade Portal.

LOGISTICS MOVING TOWARDS A NEW HORIZON:

- **Multi -Modal Logistics Parks Policy:** The Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) are a key policy initiatives of Government of India to improve the country's logistics sector by lowering over freight costs, reducing vehicular pollution and congestion and cutting warehouse costs with a view to promoting movements of goods for domestic and global trade. At present there is no specific definition, specification and standardisation of multi-modal logistics parks.
- **Different Ministries like Railways,** Shipping and Department of Industry Policy and Promotion are developing parks at the same location. This duplication is happening due to the lack of a comprehensive policy. The Commerce Ministry is consulting different stakeholders, States and UTs on the proposal on the multi-modal logistics park policy.
- **Developing Logistics Portal:** India has improved its global rankings on trading across borders from 146th rank in 2017 to 80th rank in 2018. Department of Commerce is working on reducing the logistics cost from the current 14% of GDP to 10% by 2022 through an integrated approach. A National Logistics Portal is being developed which will serve as a transactional e-marketplace by connecting buyers, logistics service providers and relevant government agencies. The portal will be a single window market place to link all stakeholders.
- **Logistics Data Bank:** A technology innovation project of India-Japan bilateral cooperation, Logistics Data Bank Project has already been commissioned to track containers on a 'near-real-time' basis. This is one of the initiatives of Government of India as part of its Ease of Doing Business initiative wherein RFID tags are placed on every container coming out of the ports to track its movement. The project has already expanded to various ports (JNPT, Mundra, Hazira, Chennai, Paradip, Kattupalli, Ennore, Krishnapatnam, Mumbai, Murmugao, Visakhapatnam, New Mangalore and Kolkata) in India and has covered around 90% of total container volumes in India.

SEZ POLICY:

- **The Baba Kalyani** led committee constituted by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to study the existing SEZ policy of India has submitted its report to the Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu.
- **The objectives of the committee** were to evaluate the SEZ policy and make it WTO compatible, suggest measures for maximizing utilisation of vacant land in SEZs, suggest changes in the SEZ policy based on international experience and merge the SEZ policy with other Government schemes like coastal economic zones, Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor, national industrial manufacturing zones and food and textiles parks.
- **While submitting the report** to the Commerce Minister, Baba Kalyani, Chairman, Bharat Forge Ltd., said that if India is going to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 then the current environment of manufacturing competitiveness and services has to undergo a paradigm shift. The success seen by services sector like IT and ITeS has to be promoted in other services sector like health care, financial services, legal, repair and design services.
- **The Government of India** has set a target of creating 100 million jobs and achieving 25% of GDP from the manufacturing sector by 2022, as part of its flagship 'Make in India' programme. Furthermore, the Government plans to increase manufacturing value to USD 1.2 trillion by 2025. While these are ambitious plans to propel India into a growth trajectory, it requires evaluation of existing policy frameworks to catalyse manufacturing sector growth. At the same time, policy needs to be complied with the relevant WTO regulations.

Industrial Corridors:

- **Industrial corridor programme** envisages creation of world class infrastructure, connectivity and new greenfield smart cities as global manufacturing hubs which will create large employment opportunities. The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) Project has made substantial progress with trunk infrastructure development activities nearing completion at four locations in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Allotment of developed land to industries has begun in these places and 56 plots constituting 335.51 acres have already been allotted. This is expected to bring an investment of about Rs. 8354 crore over a period of 3-5 years.

- **Based on the initial success of DMIC project**, the Government has also started planning and development activities in four other industrial corridor projects i.e. Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC), Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC), Bengaluru Mumbai Economic Corridor (BMEC) and East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) from Kolkata to Chennai. Trunk infrastructure activities in these corridor projects are planned to be initiated from next year.

TRADE PROMOTION ORGANISATIONS:

- **India Trade Promotion Organisation:** India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) is the trade promotion agency of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is a venue for exhibitions and conventions at its ground in Pragati Maidan in New Delhi. It has an area of nearly 150 acres and 625,000 square metres exhibition space. It was demolished in April, 2017 for re-development and after completion will be the biggest exhibition centre in Delhi. The ITPO holds the India International Trade Fair (IITF) since 1980 every year. It is a premier international trade fair and has evolved as a major event for business community.
- **Around 800 participants** from States, government departments, domestic and international companies are taking part with considerable participation of rural artisans, craftsmen and SME entrepreneurs. The Fair received foreign participation from Afghanistan, China, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Tunisia, Vietnam and UAE.
- **India International Convention and Expo Centre:** The Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion of the Ministry of Commerce is developing India International Convention and Expo Centre as a world class facility over an area of 221.37 acres in Sector 25 Dwarka, New Delhi at an estimated cost of Rs. 25,703 crore. The foundation stone for the Project was laid by the Prime Minister of India on 20th September 2018. Phase-I will be completed by December 2019 and the Phase-II will be completed by December 2024.

Trade Promotion Council of India:

- **In January 2018**, Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) and Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry organized a two-day international food and beverage expo Indusfood which saw Indian exporters bagging orders worth over USD 500 million.
- **Indusfood was able to find new markets** for Indian tea and spices, besides getting huge orders for rice, soybean oil, fish products, fruits, vegetables, organic food and various other commodities. TPCI also organised exhibitions in Bangkok, Hanover, Johannesburg, Mexico City and Paris.
- **TPCI is organising Indusfood-II** in Greater Noida, NCR, Delhi on 14th – 15th January, 2019. 600 global buyers from 50 countries and over 350 Indian exporters and producers are expected to participate at this World Food Supermarket.

Indian Footwear, Leather & Accessories Development Programme (IFLADP)

- **The Central Government** has approved a special package for employment generation in leather and footwear sector. The package involves implementation of Central Sector Scheme "Indian Footwear, Leather & Accessories Development Programme" with an approved expenditure of Rs. 2600 crore over the three financial years from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The scheme would lead to development of infrastructure for the leather sector, address environment concerns specific to the leather sector, facilitate additional investments, generate employment and increase production. Enhanced tax incentive would attract large scale investments in the sector and reform in labour law, in view of seasonal nature of the sector, will support economies of scale.
- **Government has approved Rs. 328.43 crore** for upgradation of 9 Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) for leather industry in Tamil Nadu and Rs. 129.62 crores for upgradation of seven Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI) centers into Centres for Excellence (CoEs) and has given in-principle approval for setting up of Mega Leather, Footwear and Accessories Clusters (MLFACs) at Bantala, Kolkata. A target for providing primary skill development training to 1,40,000 unemployed persons and skill upgradation training to 20,000 workers during each year 2018-19 and 2019-20 has been assigned under Human Resource Development (HRD) sub-scheme of IFLADP.
- **During 2017-18**, primary skill development training has been provided to 94,232 unemployed persons in leather & footwear sector and of them 71,125 trainees have been provided placement in the industry during 2017-18 under Human Resource Development (HRD) sub-scheme of IFLADP. Further, 25,643 persons have been trained under primary skill development training programme during 2018-19.

- **North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP)**, 2007/ Freight Subsidy Scheme,2013(FSS) and North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), 2017.
- **With the purpose to boost industrialization** of the States of North East region including Sikkim, the Government has been implementing industrial subsidy schemes such as North East Industrial Policy, (NEIP) (1997-2007), North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, (NEIIPP) (2007-2017), Transport Subsidy Scheme(TSS) (1971-2013) and Freight Subsidy Scheme(FSS) (2013-2016). Under NEIIPP cash subsidies aggregating to Rs.2045 crore have been released since inception. Rs.1598.53 crore has been released under NEIIPP and Rs.1455.59 crore under TSS and FSS in the last 4 years.
- **To continue extending benefits** for the industrial units situated in the North Eastern Region, a new policy "North East Industrial Development Scheme" (NEIDS),2017 was notified on 01.04.2017 for a period of five years.
- **Special Package Scheme for Himachal Pradesh**, Uttarakhand and J&K and Industrial Development Scheme for Himalayan States -2017 (IDS-2017)
- **Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP)** had introduced various concessions for the State of Jammu & Kashmir namely, J&K package-I and J&K package-II. from June, 2002 to till 14th June, 2017 to boost up industrialization. For the States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand various concessions were introduced from June 2003 to 31st March, 2017. Resultant to these concessions, 75118 units were set up generating 6,52,757 employment and creating investment of Rs. 55,550.42 crore. Under the Special Package Scheme Rs.380.65 crore has been released during the last 4 years and total amount of Rs. 119.11 crore got released during the financial year 2018-19 (up to 30.09.2018).
- **Industrial Development Scheme** for J&K from 15.06.2017 to 31.03.2022 and Industrial Development Scheme for Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand from 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2022 has been notified on 23.04.2018 with financial outlay of Rs. 194.90 crore.
- **Scheme of Budgetary Support Under GST Regime** The Scheme of Budgetary Support to the eligible units located in the states of J&K, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and North Eastern States including Sikkim under GST regime was notified in October 2017 to continue committed liability for the residual period out of a total of 10 years. The scheme will remain in force from 01-07-2017 till 30-06-2027.
- **Under the scheme 1673 units** have been registered. Rs 1500 crore has been authorized to CBIC for payment to the eligible units. Budget of Rs 4000 crore for 2019-20 has also been sought.

GOVERNMENT E-MARKETPLACE (GeM) ADDS SPARKLE:

- **Number of users** (buyer & sellers) on GeM, the national e-public procurement portal, have grown 186% during last one year. Transactions have increased 772% in volume terms and 599% in value terms. More than 26% of vendors in GeM are MSMEs accounting for 56% of transactions by value, making it a truly open and inclusive platform.
- **During the 6-week** National Mission of GeM (NMG) launched recently by Commerce Minister, GeM organized training in more than 220 districts and 180 towns, covering about 50,000 buyers and sellers.
- **During the mission**, 1617 organizations have been on-boarded and 1405 new organizations have started transactions. As per road map emerging out of the national mission, railways have set a target to carry out annual procurement of Rs. 10,000 crore through GeM provision in IREPS during the next year.

PROMOTION OF TRADE:

- **Commerce Ministry** is working closely with the Finance Ministry to ease credit flow to the export sector, especially small exporters to ensure adequate availability of funds to them.
- **The Commerce Minister** has identified 15 strategic overseas locations where the Trade Promotion Organisations (TPOs) are proposed to be created. India has great potential to generate greater volumes of export with these countries but at present trade with them stands as single digit numbers.
- **The locations** where TPOs are proposed : Astana (Kazakhstan), Beijing (China) Cape town (South Africa), Dubai (UAE), Frankfurt (Germany), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), Jakarta (Indonesia) Lima (Peru), London (U.K.), Melbourne (Australia), Mexico City (Mexico), Moscow (Russia), New York (USA), Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Tokyo (Japan).

EXPORTS ON THE RISE:

- **India's exports** clocked highest growth in last 6 years. Sector specific interventions, focused export promotion initiatives, greater transparency and quick resolution of issues have led to an impressive export growth of 14.76% in 2017-18 (Oct-Sept) over previous year.
- **The Department of Commerce** is making all efforts to diversify India's export basket region wise and commodity wise. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are a means of correcting India's balance of trade.
- **With the USA bilateral negotiations** are on and with China, India has held three inter-ministerial delegations in June, August and November 2018 led by the Department of Commerce to pursue market access issues with Ministry of Commerce China (MOFCOM).
- **General Administration of Custom China (GACC)** has approved total 24 Indian rice mills for exporting non-basmati rice to China and the first consignment of 100 tonnes of white rice (5% broken) was shipped on 28.09.2018 and 30.09.2018.
- **In October 2018** another 23 tonnes of rice was exported to China followed by 260 tonnes in November 2018. Export of rapeseed meal to China, which was discontinued in 2012, has been opened up now with consistent and continuous efforts of Department of Commerce and GACC has approved five rapeseed mills to supply rapeseed meal to China.
- **The GACC teams** have also visited India to inspect soybean meal mills and pomegranate orchards and pack houses in December 2018. China will also begin importing 50,000 tonnes of raw sugar from India early next year.

METALS AND MINERALS TRADING CORPORATION (MMTC):

- **MMTC is one of the two highest earners** of foreign exchange for India and the largest public sector trading body.
- **During the first half of the year**, MMTC has achieved revenue from operations of Rs.12511 crore as against Rs. 9969 crore during the corresponding period last year registering a growth of 26% over the same period last year on year on year basis.
- **The company has posted a Net Profit** of Rs 41.62 crore during the period as compared to Rs. 29.76 crore during the same period last year registering an increase of 40%. The performance of the company during the second half of FY 2018-19 is likely to improve further.

Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme:

- **The Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES)** provides assistance for setting up and up-gradation of infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, dry ports, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports, airports cargo terminuses.
- **The Central and State Agencies**, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ authorities and apex trade bodies recognised under the EXIM policy of Government of India, are eligible for financial support under this scheme.

Ease of doing business for exporters - steps taken by DGFT:

- **Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** has taken several measures to strengthen the IT platform and create ease of doing business for exporters:

DGFT has upgraded the existing IT-hardware this year.

- **An online grievance redressal** service was launched on DGFT website in September 2017: Contact@DGFT. It's single point contact for all foreign trade related issues of the exporters and importers. In the last year, over 60,000 grievances have been received on this platform, 97% of the grievances have been addressed.
- **DGFT's EDI system provides facility** for online application by exporters-importers for most of it's schemes and authorisations – IEC, Advance Authorization Scheme, Annual Advance Authorization Scheme, DFIA, EPCG Scheme, Annual EPCG Scheme, MEIS, SEIS, a FPS, FMS, MLFPS, VKGUY, SFIS, SHIS, Incremental Export Incentivisation Scheme, Authorization for import and export of restricted items. The interface with other agencies (Customs and RBI) is also through EDI system.
- **An online view of Shipping Bill data**, electronically received from Customs, has been created for all Shipping Bills issued since 1.4.2016 for regional offices. Now, the exporters will not require to file physical copy of shipping bill for redemption of EODC. DGFT regional Offices can use electronically transmitted SB data from Customs for various other purposes also.
- **Exporters can self-generate Importer Exporter Code (IEC)** on online platform. Online auto approval of MEIS benefit has been introduced since September 2018 for 97% of product lines under MEIS. Now, MEIS applications are system approved and scrips are released within 3 days of the approval.
- **Call centre has been strengthened** and now all telephone calls received on the help desk are closely monitored. An IVRS system has also been deployed.

INDIA IMPROVES RANKING IN EASE OF DOING BUSINESS:

- **India has made a leap of 23 ranks** in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Ranking this year to be ranked at 77. Upward move of 53 ranks in the last two years is the highest improvement in 2 years by any large country since 2011. India now ranks first in Ease of Doing Business Report among South Asian countries compared to 6th in 2014.
- **India has improved its rank in 6 out of 10 indicators** and has moved closer to international best practices (Distance to Frontier score) on 7 out of the 10 indicators. The most dramatic improvements have been registered in the indicators related to construction permits and trading across borders. In grant of construction permits, India's rank improved from 181 in 2017 to 52 in 2018, an improvement of 129 ranks in a single year. In trading across borders, India's rank improved by 66 positions, moving from 146 in 2017 to 80 in 2018.

VISION OF A NEW INDIA:

- **The Ministry of Commerce & Industry** is creating an action-oriented plan which will highlight specific sector level interventions to bolster India's march towards becoming a USD 5 trillion economy before 2025. The focused plans will be on boosting services sector contribution to USD 3 trillion, manufacturing to USD 1 trillion and Agriculture to USD 1 trillion.
- **The Ministry has created a corpus** of USD 1 billion to boost 12 champion sectors in services and it is working on releasing the New Industrial Policy keeping in mind the demands of the future. Further all efforts of both the Department of Commerce and Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion have been towards achieving the goal of India becoming USD 5 trillion economy.

12 Champion Sectors:

- **The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister** approved the proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors for promoting their development, and realizing their potential.
- **These include Information Technology & Information Technology** enabled Services (IT &ITeS), Tourism and Hospitality Services, Medical Value Travel, Transport and Logistics Services, Accounting and Finance Services, Audio Visual Services, Legal Services, Communication Services, Construction and Related Engineering Services, Environmental Services, Financial Services and Education Services.
- **This initiative will enhance the competitiveness** of India's service sectors through the implementation of focused and monitored Action Plans, thereby promoting GDP growth, creating more jobs and promoting exports to global markets.
- **Services sector in India has immense employment** potential, it will enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors through the implementation of focused and monitored Action Plans, thereby creating more jobs in India, contributing to a higher GDP and exports of services to global markets.
- **As the Services sector contributes** significantly to India's GDP, exports and job creation, increased productivity and competitiveness of the Champion Services Sectors will further boost exports of various services from India. Embedded services are substantial part of 'Goods' as well. Thus, competitive services sector will add to the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector as well.
- **The share of India's services sector** in global services exports was 3.3% in 2015 compared to 3.1% in 2014. Based on this initiative, a goal of 4.2 % has been envisaged for 2022.
- **The share of services in Gross Value Added (GVA)** was about 5.3% for India in 2015-16 (6.1 % including construction services). A goal of achieving a share of services in GVA of 6.0 % (6.7% including construction services) has also been envisaged by the year 2022

Agriculture Export Policy, 2018

- **The Commerce Ministry has formulated** India's first ever Agricultural Export Policy with a focused plan to boost India's agricultural exports to USD 60 billion by 2022 thereby assisting the Agriculture Ministry in achieving its target of USD 100 billion and to integrate Indian farmers and the high quality agricultural products with global value chains and to double India's share in world agriculture.
- **The vision of the Agriculture Export Policy** is to harness the export potential of Indian agriculture through suitable policy instruments and to make India a global power in agriculture and raise farmers' income.

No religious minority tag to Lingayat/Veerashaiva community

- **The Union government has reiterated** the earlier stand of the Centre that Lingayat/Veerashaiva community is part of Hindu religion.
- **Background:** The community has been demanding status of a separate religion for a long time. One part of the community demands the minority status for both Veerashaiva and Lingayats considering them the same, while another wants it only for the Lingayats as it considers Veerashaivas to be Hindus.
- **The Karnataka government**, in March this year, decided to declare Lingayats as a religious minority and include the Veerashaivas who follow Basavanna as a group within the community.
- **Who are Lingayats?** Lingayats are followers of 12th-century social reformer Basavanna and his vachana (verses) philosophy. Their beliefs, practices and faith are different. Veerashaivas worship Lord Shiva, the one mentioned in Hindu mythology. However, the Shiva that Basavanna referred to in his vachanas (verses) is not the Hindu god Shiva but the ishtalinga (formless God), which people of the community wear around their neck.
- **Who are Veerashaivas?** Veerashaivas are a sub-sect of Lingayats and ardent followers of Lord Shiva. They preceded Basavanna, the founder of Lingayatism. Veerashaivism has its roots in the Vedas and Agamas, and Veerashaivas do not worship any god other than Shiva; they can be found spread across Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Who is Basavanna?** Basavanna was a 12th-century social reformer. The revolution that Basavanna led came years after the Buddha. It was Basavanna and his contemporary Sharanas who launched a very strong spiritual, social and religious rebellion against Brahminical hegemony. Basavanna had declared that "work is worship". He gave women equal status in his movement through the vachanas (verses). In order to take the social movement closer to the people, Basavanna and all the other Sharanas voiced their concerns in simple Kannada vachanas so that even lay people could comprehend them.

Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (Land Acquisition Act), 2013

- **What's the issue?** The activists have questioned the changes made to the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (Land Acquisition Act), 2013 by Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. The petitioners have contended that the amendments by the states are identical and go against the "basic structure" of the central law.
- **According to the petition** the states amended the act by way of ordinances to exempt broad categories of land projects from consent provisions, social impact assessment, objections by affected citizens and participation of local bodies. Projects exempted are linear category projects such as industrial corridors, expressways, highways etc.
- **Petitioners have challenged** the power of the states to introduce such amendments that are conflicting with the central law and want them to be declared as illegal.
- **Petitioners contend** that the amendments made by the states were in violation of Article 21, which guarantees the right to live with dignity and personal liberty.
- **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act):**
- **Main features of act:** Clearly defines various types of "public purpose" projects for which, Government can acquire private land.
- **Acquiring land: For private project**, 80% affected families must agree. For PPP project, 70% affected families must agree. Only then land can be acquired.
- **Social impact assessment:** Under Social impact assessment (SIA) even need to obtain consent of the affected artisans, labourers, share-croppers, tenant farmers etc whose (sustainable) livelihood will be affected because of the given project.
- **Compensation:** Compensation proportion to market rates. 4 times the market rate in rural area. 2 times in urban area. Affected artisans, small traders, fishermen etc. will be given one-time payment, even if they don't own any land.
- **To ensure food security:** Fertile, irrigated, multi-cropped farmland can be acquired only in last resort. If such fertile land is acquired, then Government will have to develop equal size of wasteland for agriculture purpose.
- **Private entities:** If Government acquires the lands for private company- the said private company will be responsible for relief and rehabilitation of the affected people. Additional rehabilitation package for SC/ST owners.
- **Safeguards:** State Governments have to setup dispute settlement Chairman must be a district judge or lawyer for 7 years.
- **Accountability:** Head of the department will be made responsible, for any offense from Government's side. If project doesn't start in 5 years, land has to be returned to the original owner or the land bank. Establishment of Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Authority for speedy disposal of disputes.
- **Limitations:** The Central Act of 2013 was brought to give effect to pre-existing fundamental right to livelihood of citizens. It ensures that livelihood will not be taken away unless(i) it is in public interest and that is seen by social impact assessment (ii) The affected citizens are given rehabilitation. The amendments made without considering the above factors will take away fundamental rights of the citizens.

Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs)

- **As of April**, the CDSCO had approved 1,288 FDCs. This is disproportionately high compared with the availability in a tightly regulated market like USFDA, which has only a few hundred approved FDCs.
- **What's the main concern now?** The problem of unapproved FDCs mainly affects those who get treated in the private sector. In the absence of a strong pharmacovigilance mechanism in India, there is no data on adverse events of these unapproved FDCs.
- **What's ailing the system?** There are multiple deficiencies in the CDSCO's approval process for FDCs. Main amongst them are institutional problems such as understaffing, lack of skills, and inadequate infrastructure. However, the most significant issue is the issuance of manufacturing licenses by the State Licensing Authority without the prior clearance of the Drug Controller General of India DCG(I), the head of CDSCO.

- **What are FDCs?** An FDC is a cocktail of two or more active drug ingredients in a fixed ratio of doses. According to US healthcare provider IMS Health, almost half the drugs sold in India in 2014 were FDC, making it a world leader in combination drugs.
- **Why are they popular in India?** FDCs' popularity in India is due to advantages such as increased efficacy, better compliance, reduced cost and simpler logistics of distribution. FDCs have shown to be particularly useful in the treatment of infectious diseases like HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, where giving multiple antimicrobial agents is the norm. FDCs are also useful for chronic conditions especially, when multiple disorders co-exist.
- **About CDSCO:** The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
- **Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act,** CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bringing about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- **Further CDSCO along with state regulators,** is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

Health Ministry notifies four more devices under Drugs and Cosmetics Act

- **Impact:** The Drug Controller-General of India (DCGI) would regulate the import, manufacture and sale of these devices from January 1, 2020.
- **All these devices** will have to be registered under the quality parameters prescribed under Medical Devices Rules 2017 and other standards set by the Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) certification.
- **Also, companies** which are engaged in the manufacture and import of these equipment, will have to seek the necessary permission or license from the Drug Controller-General of India.
- **Currently,** only 23 medical devices are monitored for quality by the country's drug regulator. With four new devices being notified, 27 medical devices now fall under the definition of drugs under the Act. The other medical equipments are sold without any quality checks or clinical trials.
- **Background:** The Drug Technical Advisory Body (DTAB), the country's highest drug advisory body, had approved the proposal to include nebulizers, blood pressure monitoring devices, digital thermometers and glucometers under the purview of the Drug Law.
- **About DTAB:** Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) is the highest decision-making body under the Union health ministry on technical matters. Director General of Health Services (DGHS) is the ex-officio chairman of this statutory body which is constituted by the ministry under section 5 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Agni-V Missile

- **Key features of the missile:** Agni- 5 is the intercontinental surface-to-surface nuclear capable ballistic missile. It is the latest in India's "Agni" family of medium to intercontinental range missiles.
- **Agni-5 has a range of over 5,000 km** and can carry about a 1500-kg warhead. It can target almost all of Asia including Pakistan and China and Europe.
- **The 17-metre long Agni-5 Missile** weighs about 50 tonnes and is a very agile and modern weapon system.
- **The surface-to-surface missile** is a fire-and-forget system that cannot be easily detected as it follows a ballistic trajectory. India describes the Agni – 5 missile system as a 'weapon of peace'.
- **India has already joined an elite club** of nations that possess the ICBM launch capability when the maiden test-firing of Agni-V was successfully conducted in April, 2012. Only the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, the United States and Britain, along with Israel, have so far possessed such long-range missiles.

NASA's Voyager 2 spacecraft

- **Accomplishments so far:** Voyager 2 is the only probe ever to study Neptune and Uranus during planetary flybys. It is the second man-made object to leave our planet. It is now 11 billion miles from Earth, following behind its sister spacecraft, Voyager 1, which is 6 years ahead of it. The probe is estimated to be travelling at 34,000 mph.
- **Voyager 2 is the only** spacecraft to have visited all four gas giant planets — Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune — and discovered 16 moons, as well as phenomena like Neptune's mysteriously transient Great Dark Spot, the cracks in Europa's ice shell, and ring features at every planet.
- **What is Interstellar space?** Scientists use the heliopause to mark where interstellar space begins, although depending on how you define our solar system it can stretch all the way to the Oort Cloud, which begins 1,000 times farther away from the sun than Earth's orbit.
- **The Heliosphere:** The heliosphere is a bubble around the sun created by the outward flow of the solar wind from the sun and the opposing inward flow of the interstellar wind. That heliosphere is the region influenced by the dynamic properties of the sun that are carried in the solar wind—such as magnetic fields, energetic particles and solar wind plasma. The heliopause marks the end of the heliosphere and the beginning of interstellar space.
- **About Voyager mission:** The Voyager mission was launched in the 1970's, and the probes sent by NASA were only meant to explore the outer planets – but they just kept on going. Voyager 1 departed Earth on 5 September 1977, a few days after Voyager 2 and left our solar system in 2013.
- **The mission objective** of the Voyager Interstellar Mission (VIM) is to extend the NASA exploration of the solar system beyond the neighborhood of the outer planets to the outer limits of the Sun's sphere of influence, and possibly beyond.
- **The Voyager spacecraft** are the third and fourth human spacecraft to fly beyond all the planets in our solar system. Pioneers 10 and 11 preceded Voyager in outstripping the gravitational attraction of the Sun but on February 17, 1998, Voyager 1 passed Pioneer 10 to become the most distant human-made object in space.

Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE) 2018

- **Highlights of the report:** Many of the world's largest energy-consuming countries significantly improved their renewable energy regulations since 2010.
- **Progress** was even more marked in energy efficiency, with the percentage of countries establishing advanced policy frameworks growing more than 10-fold between 2010 and 2017.
- **Among countries** with large populations living without electricity, 75 per cent had by 2017 put in place the policies and regulations needed to expand energy access. But there were still significant barriers to global progress on sustainable energy.
- **While countries** continue to be focused on clean energy policies for electricity, policies to decarbonize heating and transportation, which account for 80 per cent of global energy use, continued to be overlooked.
- **This momentum** was particularly marked in renewable energy. Among the countries covered by RISE, only 37 per cent had a national renewable energy target in 2010. By 2017, that had grown to 93 per cent.
- **By last year**, 84 per cent of countries had a legal framework in place to support renewable energy deployment, while 95 per cent allowed the private sector to own and operate renewable energy projects.
- **Among the four SDG7** target areas — renewable energy, energy efficiency, electricity access and access to clean cooking — the last one continued to be the most overlooked and underfunded by policymakers.
- **There has been little progress** on standard-setting for cookstoves or on consumer and producer incentives to stimulate adoption of clean technologies.
- **Indian scenario:** India has gained a great success in renewable energy auctions that delivered record-setting low prices for solar power. However, to realize its full potential, the country needs to address critical gaps, such as failing utilities, clean cooking, and the slow progress on decarbonizing heating and transport.

Kerala becomes first state to have four international airports:

- **With the inauguration** of the Kannur airport, Kerala has now become the first state in India to have four international airports, with Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode being the other three.
- **Kaiga power station-1 creates a world record yet again:** Karnataka's Kaiga has once again made the country proud by creating a world record for the longest uninterrupted operation for 941 days, thereby breaking the earlier record of 940 days by the United Kingdom.
- **Background: KGS-1 at Kaiga**, located 56 km from Karwar has been generating electricity continuously since May 13, 2016. It is an indigenously-built PHWR run by domestic fuel (uranium). It began commercial operations on November 16, 2000, and has produced 500 cr. units of power so far. In June, KGS-1 had set a national record for continuous operation of 766 days.



Year End Report 2018- Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas

- **Energy is a key driver of economic growth** and the Government's focus has been to bring about transformational changes in the energy landscape of India to fulfil the twin objectives of energy justice and climate justice. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry has endeavored to "Reform, Perform and Transform" the sector. The government has taken several reforms and accomplished major task with far-reaching impacts in the sectors of Exploration and Production, Refinery, Marketing, Natural Gas and international cooperation.
- **1. Exploration & Production** A number of new initiatives have been taken in the last one year to promote Exploration and Production activities in the country. In a major policy drive to give a boost to petroleum and hydrocarbon sector, the Government has unveiled a series of policy reforms. Some of the notable Policy reforms are listed as under:
 - **i. Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)/ Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)** – This is a paradigm shift from Production Sharing Contract (PSC) regime to Revenue Sharing Contract (RSC) regime based on the principle of ease of doing business. It provides for single License for exploration and production of conventional as well as non-conventional Hydrocarbon resources; Pricing and Marketing Freedom; reduced rate of royalty for offshore blocks, Open Acreage Licensing Policy that means option to select the exploration blocks without waiting for formal bid round. Expression of Interest can be submitted round the year and Bidding is carried out every 6 months.
 - **Under OALP Bid Round I**, 55 Blocks having area of 59,282 sq. Km have been awarded on 1st October, 2018. OALP Bid Round II with 14 blocks is in the offering.
 - **ii. Policy Framework to Promote and Incentivize Enhanced Recovery Methods** for Oil and Gas- The Government has approved the Policy framework to promote and encourage adoption of Enhanced Recovery (ER)/Improved Recovery (IR)/Unconventional Hydrocarbon (UHC) production Methods/techniques through fiscal incentives and an enabling ecosystem to improve productivity of existing fields and enhance overall production of domestic hydrocarbons. The Policy provides for systemic assessment of every field for its ER potential, appraisal of appropriate ER techniques and fiscal incentives to de-risk the cost involved in ER Projects and to make it economically viable.
 - **iii. Discovered Small Field Policy (DSF) Policy**, Round I & II - For early monetization of unmonetized discoveries of National Oil Companies (NoCs), Cabinet in September, 2015 approved 69 marginal fields for offer under Discovered Small Fields Policy. These contract areas are awarded under the new regime of Revenue Sharing Model. Award of contract is expected to provide faster development of fields and facilitate production of oil and gas.
 - **The First bidding** round under the Discovered Small Field Policy was launched on 25th May 2016, thereby offering 67 discovered small fields in 46 contract areas of ONGC and OIL for international bidding. Total 30 contracts for 43 discovered small fields were signed with 20 companies in March, 2017. It is expected that in-place locked hydrocarbons volume of 40 MMT oil and 22.0 BCM of gas will be monetised over a period of 15 years.
 - **On 7th February, 2018, Cabinet** has approved the Discovered Small Field Policy Bid Round-II, an extension of the Discovered Small Field Policy notified on 14.10.2015. Under DSF-II, 59 discovered small fields/unmonetized discoveries estimated to have 194.65 Million Metric Ton (MMT) Oil and Oil equivalent gas in place are offered for bidding.
 - **The Second Bidding Round** under DSF Policy offering 59 discoveries clubbed into 25 new Contract Areas was launched on 9th August, 2018.
 - **iv. National Seismic Programme of Un-appraised areas** – The Government has taken up programme of undertaking 2D seismic survey of entire un-appraised areas. National Seismic Programme was launched on 12th October, 2016. Under the programme, Government has approved the proposal for conducting 2D seismic survey for data Acquisition, Processing and Interpretation (API) of 48,243 Line Kilo Metres (LKM). The estimated cost of the project is Rs.2932.99 crore and the project is proposed to be completed by 2019-20.
 - **As on 31st October, 2018**, surface coverage of 28485 LKM, out of 48,243 LKM has been achieved under 2D Seismic data acquisition under National Seismic Programme.
 - **v. Policy Framework** for streamlining the working of the Production Sharing Contracts- Under this Policy, Government has allowed 2 years extension in exploration period and 1 year in Appraisal period for operational blocks in NER besides allowing marketing including pricing freedom for natural gas produced in future in NER; sharing of the statutory levies including royalty & cess in Pre-NELP Exploration Blocks and to be cost recoverable with prospective effect; extending tax benefits under Section 42 of Income Tax, 1961 to operational blocks under Pre-NELP discovered fields prospectively.
 - **vi. Re-assessment of Hydrocarbon Resources** – A Multi Organisation Team (MOT) comprising of representatives of ONGC, OIL and DGH has carried out estimation of hydrocarbon resource potential in the country. The prognosticated conventional hydrocarbon resources in 26 sedimentary basins of the country are of the order of 41.87 billion tones (oil and oil equivalent of gas), which is about 49% increase as compared to earlier estimates of 28.08 billion tones.

- **vii. Policy Framework for Exploration & Exploitation of Unconventional Hydrocarbons under Existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), Coal Bed Methane (CBM) Contracts & Nomination Fields-** Government has approved the policy to encourage the existing Contractors in the licensed/leased area to unlock the potential of unconventional hydrocarbons in the existing acreages. Under this policy, an area of 72,027 sq. km. held under PSCs and 5269 sq. km area under CBM contracts has been opened up for simultaneous exploration and exploitation of conventional or unconventional hydrocarbons.

Natural Gas

- **i. Natural Gas Grid** In order to promote the usage of natural gas as a fuel/feedstock across the country and move towards a gas based economy, the development of additional 13500 Km long gas pipeline is under way to complete the Gas Grid. The status of major under-construction gas pipeline project is as under:
 - **Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga Project (Jagdishpur – Haldia & Bokaro – Dhamra Pipeline Project (JHBDPL)):**The 2655 km. pipeline project is being executed at an investment of Rs.12,940 Crore, which includes 40% capital grant (i.e. Rs.5,176 Cr) from the Government of India and the project is scheduled to be completed progressively by December, 2020. JHBDPL will cater to the energy requirements of five states, namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. Construction work on Section 1 of JHBDPL project (770 Km) is at advanced stage and the same is expected to be commissioned shortly. Part pipeline section upto Varanasi has been operationalized to commence gas supply for Varanasi City Gas Distribution (CGD) network. Further line pipe procurement and pipe laying work for balanced section (except West Bengal) has also been awarded and construction is in progress.
 - **Barauni to Guwahati Pipeline:** To extend the Gas Grid upto North East, development of a 729 Km long pipeline from Barauni to Guwahati has been allowed as an integral part JHBDPL project. This pipeline will pass through the Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim & Assam .Pipe procurement and laying work tenders are under progress. This project is scheduled to be commissioned by December 2021.
 - **North East Region(NER) Gas Grid:** To further extend the gas grid to each states of North-East and Sikkim, a Joint Venture (JV) company, named as Indradhanush Gas Grid Ltd, has been formed by five Oil & Gas Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) i.e. IOCL, ONGC, GAIL, OIL, & NRL on 10.08.2018. This JVC will develop NER Gas Grid of about 1656 Km long in all North Eastern States i.e. Assam, Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya in a phased manner at the total cost of about Rs. 9265 Crore. PNGRB has also issued provisional authorization to IGGL on 14.09.2018 for the development of North-East gas pipeline grid. On completion, NER grid will ensure uninterrupted availability of natural gas across the region and boost industrial growth in the region.
 - **Kochi-Kootanad-Bangalore-Mangalore Pipeline (Phase-II):** GAIL is developing 872 km long pipeline at the investment of Rs 5150 Crore in the State of Kerala & Tamilnadu. Construction work in the State of Kerala is at advanced stage and is expected to be completed by mid of 2019. Further, pipeline laying work to connect Tamilnadu has also been commenced and work is under progress.
 - **Ennore-Thiruvallur-Bengaluru-Puducherry-Nagapatinam-Madurai-Tuticorin Pipeline (ETBPNMTPL):**Indian Oil is developing a 1385 Km pipeline at the investment of Rs. 4497 Crore. This pipeline will pass through the State of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh & Karnataka. Part section (Ennore-Manali & Ramanad-Tuticorin) laying work is under progress. Further, award for pipe and laying work for the remaining pipeline sections are under process.
 - **Other gas pipeline projects** to complete the Gas Grid are also at various stages of implementation and are being executed in phased manner.
- **ii. City Gas Distribution (CGD) Network** To make available natural gas to public at large, Government has put strong emphasis on expansion of City Gas Distribution (CGD) network coverage across the country. CGD networks ensures the supply of cleaner fuel (i.e. PNG) to households, Industrial & commercial units as well as transportation fuel (i.e. CNG) to vehicles. Till 2017, only 19% of the country's population spreading over 11% of the country's area was covered for development of CGDs in 96 Geographical areas. To boost the CGD sector, 9th CGD Bidding Round was launched in April, 2018 for 86 Geographical Areas (GAs) covering 174 districts in 22 States/ Union Territories of the country.
 - **38 entities** (Public and Private) participated in this round and submitted total 406 bids for all 86 GAs. As of now, 84 GAs has been authorized to the successful bidders for the development of CGD networks. Hon'ble Prime Minister, on 22nd November 2018, has laid the foundation stone for the development of CGD projects in 61 newly authorized GAs covering 129 districts spreading over 17 States/UTs as well as launched the next round (10th) of CGD bidding for 50 GAs. With the conclusion of 10th round, it will expand the coverage of CGD networks to about 70% country's population spreading over 50% of India's area. The growth of CGD coverage has potential to attract total investment of more than Rs 1,20,000 Crore in gas value chain with generation of about 3 lakh employment opportunities in coming years.
 - **iii. Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) Re-gasification** To meet the increased gas demand in the country, different entities are importing Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from global gas markets. The import of LNG is being carried out at existing four (4) LNG terminals which have regasification capacity of about 26.3 MMTPA (~ 95 MMSCMD). The terminal-wise details and their expansion plans are as under
 - **On 30th September, 2018,** Hon'ble Prime Minister inaugurated the Mundra LNG project which has been developed by GSPC LNG Limited. This terminal has the capacity to handle 5 MMTPA of LNG. In addition, two new LNG terminals of 5 MMTPA capacity each located at Ennore (Tamilnadu) and Dhamra (Odisha) are also under development at present.

Marketing

- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** In order to provide clean cooking fuel LPG to BPL households in the country, the Government has launched "Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana"(PMUY) scheme to provide to provide 5 Crore deposit-free LPG connections to women belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, which were subsequently increased to 8 Crore with a budgetary allocation of Rs. 12800 crore.
- **Beneficiaries** are identified through Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) list and in case the names are not appearing in the SECC list, beneficiaries are identified from categories i.e. SC/STs households, beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY (Gramin)), Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), Forest dwellers, Most backward Classes (MBC), Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes and people residing in Islands/ river islands.
- **The initial target** of 5 crore connections was achieved well before the target i.e.31st March, 2019. As on 05.12.2018, more than 5.83 crore connections have been released under the scheme. Implementation of PMUY has resulted in significant increase in national LPG coverage, in general and Eastern States, in particular. The World Health Organization (WHO) has appreciated the efforts of the Government and termed it as a decisive intervention to check the indoor health pollution being faced by the women of the country.

PAHAL

- **Government**, as a measure of Good Governance, has introduced well targeted system of subsidy delivery to LPG consumers through PAHAL. The initiative of the Government was aimed at rationalizing subsidies based on approach to cut subsidy leakages, but not subsidies themselves.
- **As on 06.12.2018**, more than 23.08 crore LPG consumers have joined the PAHAL Scheme. PAHAL has entered into Guinness book of World record being largest Direct Benefit Transfer scheme. So far, more than Rs. 96,625 crore have been transferred into the bank accounts of consumers.
- **PAHAL has helped** in identifying 'ghost' accounts, multiple accounts and inactive accounts. This has helped in curbing diversion of subsidized LPG to commercial purposes. So far, estimated savings due to implementation of Pahal is approximately Rs 50,000 crore.
- **Automation at OMC ROs** To enhance customer confidence through Q&Q (Quality & Quantity) of fuel and minimizes chance of fraudulent transactions, this Ministry has given target to OMCs to automate all ROs across the country wherever feasible. As on 01.11.2018, 40354 ROs (70%) have been automated across the country.
- **Promotion of Digital Payments Undertaken by MoP&NG** There has been a significant expansion of digital payment infrastructure at retail outlets. As on 20.11.2018, 100876 POS terminals and 92408 e-wallet facility have been provided at 53717 (98%) petrol pumps across the country, 52959 retail outlets have been enabled with BHIM UPI. All the LPG Distributors and City Gas distribution companies are enabled with BHIM UPI.
- **Retail Outlet Dealer Selection Advertisement Released** Expansion of retail outlet network (Petrol Pumps) is undertaken by Oil Marketing Companies primarily to meet the growing fuel needs and convenience of customers in emerging markets like upcoming highways, agricultural pockets and industrial hubs. The Retail Outlet network in Rural, remote and far-flung areas are also being expanded with the intention of reaching product, ensuring quality and correct price to meet the rural agricultural demand and people living in remote areas. Additionally, the expansion of Retail outlet network is expected to generate employment opportunities also.
- **Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)** have issued advertisements for 55652 locations across thirty States inviting applications from prospective candidates for setting up of Petrol pumps on 25th November, 2018. Advertisements for the five Assembly poll bound States will be released after the model code of conduct is lifted.
- **For the first time, computerized** "Draw of Lots"/"Bid opening" would be held under the aegis of an independent agency to bring in more transparency. All Retail outlets will be constructed with latest technology including automation.

Refinery

- **Out of the 23 refineries operation** in the country, 18 are in public sector, 3 are in private sector and two as a joint venture with a total refining capacity of 247.566 MMTPA. Out of the refining capacity of 247.566MMT, 142.066 MMT is in the public sector, 17.30MMT in joint venture and the balance 88.2 MMT is in the private sector. The country is not only self-sufficient in the refining capacity for its domestic consumption but also exports sufficient quantity of petroleum products.

Auto Fuel Vision and Policy

- **i. Introduction of BS-IV & BS-VI fuels in the Country:** Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas vide order dated 19.01.2015 has notified for implementation of BS-IV Auto Fuels in the entire country w.e.f. 01.04.2017 in a phased manner. Accordingly, BS-IV Auto Fuels has been implemented in the entire country w.e.f. 01.04.2017.
- **It has also been decided** that the country will leapfrog directly from BS-IV to BS-VI fuel standards and BS-VI standards will be implemented in the country w.e.f. 01.04.2020.
- **Considering the serious pollution** level in Delhi, Government has commenced supply of BS-VI in NCT of Delhi w.e.f. 01.04.2018.
- **ii. Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme** For ethanol supply year 2018-19, the Government has fixed remunerative price for ethanol procurement based on raw material utilized for ethanol production as follows:
 - **From C-heavy molasses at Rs. 43.46 per litre.** From B heavy molasses / partial sugarcane juice at Rs.52.43 per litre. Price of ethanol for the mills, who will divert 100% sugarcane juice for production of ethanol thereby not producing sugar, has been fixed at Rs.59.19 per litre. This price will be paid by OMCs to those sugar mills who will divert 100% sugarcane juice for production of ethanol thereby not producing any sugar. If a sugar mill produces ethanol with a combination of B heavy molasses and sugarcane juice, the ethanol price derived from B heavy molasses route shall be payable by OMCs.
 - **Further, the Government** has also allowed production of ethanol from damaged food grains. OMCs are offering differential pricing of Rs. 47.13 per litre to incentivize this route.
 - **For the previous ethanol** supply year 2017-18, the blending quantity of ethanol with petrol was 149.54 crore litres and the average blend percentage was 4.19 % which is the highest in the history of EBP Programm
 - **Subsequent to amendment** in Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951, giving control on production, movement and storage of ethanol to the Central Government, Central Government has been regularly interacting with the State Governments and other stakeholders to resolve the bottlenecks in smooth implementation of EBP Programme. Till now, Nine States have already implemented the amended provisions.
 - **The proposal to reduce GST** on denatured ethanol meant for EBP Programme was initiated by this Ministry with Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. Based on the said proposal, Government has reduced the GST rate on ethanol meant for EBP Programme from 18% to 5%.
 - **Department of Food & Public Distribution** has introduced a Scheme for extending financial assistance to sugar mills for enhancement and augmentation of ethanol production capacity. This Scheme aims to infuse Rs. 1332 crore via Interest Subvention route. Under this Scheme, 114 proposals worth Rs. 6139.08 crore have been approved which are estimated to add 200 crore litres per annum of ethanol distillation capacity.
 - **In furtherance, in line with the decision taken** in the meeting of PS to PM dated 21.09.2018 on "Ease of doing business and reduction in time taken for setting up of sugar related Distilleries", MoP&NG has developed a format to monitor the progress, identify red flags and share it with distilleries.
 - **In this regard,** Joint meetings with Project Proponents were held on 10.10.2018 and 13.11.2018. Further, MoP&NG has written letter to State Govt. of Karnataka, UP, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand for facilitating implementation of financial assistance scheme on 16.10.2018.

Bio-diesel Programme

- **Bio-diesel Programme** Purchase Orders have been issued by Oil Marketing Companies for supply of 8.14 crore litres of biodiesel during the period May – October, 2018, with provision for extension for three months. As on 30.10.2018, OMCs have procured 7.97 crore litres of Biodiesel.
- **iv. Second Generation Ethanol** Subsequent to opening up of alternate route i.e. Second Generation (2G) route for ethanol production, Oil Marketing Companies are in the process of setting up 12 2G bio-refineries with an investment of Rs.10,000 crores.
- **Detailed Feasibility Report (DFR)** for some 2G Bio-ethanol plants has been prepared by Oil PSUs. One of the Oil PSU viz. Numaligarh Refinery Ltd. has formed a JV named Assam Bio-refinery Private Limited with M/s Chempolis Oy of Finland and M/s Fortum 3 BV of Netherlands in June, 2018. The ground breaking ceremony of 2G ethanol project in Bargarh, Odisha, proposed to be set up by BPCL, was held on 10.10.2018.

National Policy on Biofuels – 2018.

- **National Policy on Biofuels – 2018.** The Government has notified National Policy on Biofuels 2018 on 8.6.2018 which is expected to give boost to the biofuel programme of the country. The major features of the Policy are as below:
- **Categorization of biofuels as “Basic Biofuels” viz.** First Generation (1G) bio ethanol & biodiesel and “Advanced Biofuels” – Second Generation (2G) ethanol, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
- **Expanding the scope of raw material for ethanol production** by allowing use of sugarcane Juice, sugar containing materials like sugar beet, sweet sorghum, starch containing materials like corn, cassava, damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, rotten potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
- **iii. The Policy allows use of surplus food grains** for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- **With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels,** the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crores in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.

Joining of Advanced Motor Fuels

- **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas** joined Advanced Motor Fuels (AMF), a Technology collaboration programme (TCP) under International Energy Agency (IEA) as Member on 9.5.2018.
- **It is an international platform** to promote collaboration in R&D for developing advanced motor fuels / alternate fuels with greater focus on improving fuel efficiency and reduced GHG emissions.

SATAT Initiative

- **The Ministry has decided** to give wide publicity to the initiative of Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT initiative) by organising Road Shows at Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh and Lucknow to promote Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) production and use.
- **Accordingly,** First Road Show was organised at Chandigarh on 17.11.2018 by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies IOCL, BPCL and HPCL.
- **The event** was attended by prospective entrepreneurs, technology providers, representatives of Punjab Energy Development Agency (PEDA), Haryana Renewable Energy Development Agency (HAREDA), financial institutions, FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM along with interested dealers / distributors and officers of OMCs.
- **In the Road Show,** the participants were informed about the SATAT initiative and entrepreneurs were encouraged to setup CBG plants and supply CBG to OMCs.

International Cooperation

- **Overseas sourcing** In February 2018, an Indian Consortium of OVL, IOCL and BPRL acquired 10% participating interest in Abu Dhabi's offshore Lower Zakum oil field.
- **The first long term LNG cargo** from US arrived at Dhabol on 30th March 2018. In April 2018, IOCL acquired 17% stake in the Mukhaizna Oilfield, Oman.
- **The first long term LNG cargo** from Russia arrived at Dhahej on 4th June 2018.

Important Agreements / Contracts

- **Saudi Aramco and ADNOC signed** a MoU in June 2018 to jointly develop and build an integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex promoted by Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd. (RRPCL) at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra.
- **India and USA launched** Strategic Energy Partnership Ministerial level Energy Dialogue process on 17th April 2018.
- **PMs of India and Nepal** launched the ground-breaking ceremony of India-Nepal petroleum products pipeline from Motihari to Amlekhgunj through live-streaming in New Delhi on 7th April 2018.
- **A tripartite MoU** was signed between Petronet LNG of India, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, and a Japanese company in April, 2018 to set up LNG terminal at Colombo.
- **ISPRL and ADNOC (of UAE)** signed a restated Definitive Agreement on Oil Storage and Management on 10th February 2018 for filling 5.86 million barrels of crude oil in the Mangalore SPR facility.
- **On 18 September, 2018**, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline was inaugurated by the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh.
- **On 12th November, 2018** a MoU was signed between ISPRL and ADNOC for exploring participation of ADNOC in Padur SPR.

Major International Conferences / Meetings:

- **India hosted the 16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial Meeting** from 10-12th April 2018 in New Delhi.
- **The 2nd meeting of the International Think Tank (ITT)** was held on 13th October 2018 to discuss the challenges and the way forward for the Indian Oil and Gas sector for the future.
- **3rd meeting of India-OPEC Energy Dialogue** was held on 17th October 2018 Minister PNG inaugurated the 2nd annual India Energy Forum by CERAWEEK in New Delhi, from 14 - 16 October 2018.
- **In October, 2018 Road Shows were held by ISPRL** in New Delhi, Singapore and London to finalize PPP model for construction and filling of Phase-II Strategic Petroleum Reserves facilities proposed for construction.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

- **i. Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** received Swachh Bharat National Award for Swachhata Action Plan (SAP) 2017-18 in Swachh Bharat National Award ceremony held on Gandhi Jayanti, 02nd October, 2018. MoPNG allocated a budget of Rs. 335.68 crore for SAP 2017- 18 and continuous monitoring through various apex level review meetings, MoPNG including Oil & Gas CPSEs, has achieved an expenditure figure of around Rs. 402 crore, showing an achievement of around 120%.

- **ii. As a precursor to the launch** of the 150th birth year celebrations of Mahatama Gandhi, MoPNG observed Swachhata Hi Seva 2018 (SHS) from 15th September to 2nd October, 2018. MoPNG led the SHS campaign from the front. Ministry has undertaken various initiatives which inter-alia include organizing Shramdaan at various locations, conducting rallies/walkathon/cyclothons to generate awareness about sanitation; distribution of jute bags to general public to make plastic free zone; organizing cleaning drives at tourist places; constructing toilets in schools, public places, etc., distributing sanitary and hygiene products and organizing health talks and health camps.

National Pension Scheme

- **Changes approved in the National Pension System:** Mandatory contribution by the Central Government enhanced by 4 percent from the existing 10 percent to 14 percent for employees covered under NPS Tier-I Central government employees will be provided with freedom of choice for selection of Pension Funds and pattern of investment. Payment of compensation for non-deposit or delayed deposit of NPS contributions during 2004-2012
- **Contribution by Government employees** under Tier-II of NPS will now be covered under Section 80 C for deduction up to Rs 1.50 lakh for the purpose of income tax at par with schemes such as General (PF), Contributory PF, Employees PF and Public PF, with lock-in period of 3 years. The entire withdrawal will now be exempt from income tax as the tax exemption limit for lump sum withdrawal on exit has been enhanced to 60 percent.
- **Implications:** The move is set to benefit around 36 lakh subscribers, including approximately 18 lakh Central government employees covered under NPS. It will cost the exchequer Rs 2,840 crore in the current financial year.
- **What is National Pension System (NPS)?** National Pension System (NPS) is a government-sponsored pension scheme. It was launched in January 2004 for government employees. However, in 2009, it was opened to all sections.
- **The scheme allows** subscribers to contribute regularly in a pension account during their working life. On retirement, subscribers can withdraw a part of the corpus in a lumpsum and use the remaining corpus to buy an annuity to secure a regular income after retirement. This system is managed by PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority).
- **Who can join NPS?** Any Indian citizen between 18 and 60 years can join NPS. The only condition is that the person must comply with know your customer (KYC) norms.
- **Can a Non Resident Indian (NRI) join NPS?** Yes, an NRI can join NPS. However, the account will be closed if there is a change in the citizenship status of the NRI.

PCS 1x System

- **Significance:** The platform has the potential to revolutionize maritime trade in India and bring it at par with global best practices and pave the way to improve the Ease of Doing Business world ranking and Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranks.
- **About PCS 1x:** 'PCS 1x' is a cloud based new generation technology, with user-friendly interface. This system seamlessly integrates stakeholders from the maritime trade on a single platform.
- **The platform offers** value added services such as notification engine, workflow, mobile application, track and trace, better user interface, better security features, improved inclusion by offering dashboard for those with no IT capability.
- **Another major feature** is the deployment of a world class state of the art payment aggregator solution which removes dependency on bank specific payment eco system.
- **Other Features:** It is an initiative that supports green initiatives by reducing dependency on paper. It has been developed indigenously and is a part of the 'Make in India' and 'Digital India'
- **Indian Ports Association (IPA):** IPA was constituted in 1966 under Societies Registration Act, with the idea of fostering growth and development of all Major Ports which are under the supervisory control of Ministry of Shipping.

UN Panel of Auditors

- **About UN Panel of Auditors:** The United Nations Panel of Auditors consists of External Auditors of the United Nations and its agencies.
- **The United Nations General Assembly** in 1959 established the Panel of External Auditors, comprising the individual external auditors of the United Nations system, who are also Heads of Supreme Audit Institutions.
- **Presently, the panel consists of 11 countries** — India, Germany, Chile, Canada, France, Italy, Philippines, Ghana, Indonesia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Currently, the panel is chaired by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the UK.
- **Functions of the Panel of External Auditors:** Panel Members share experiences and methodologies so as to ensure uniformity of external audit practices throughout the United Nations system. Panel Members provide independent assurance to Member States and other stakeholders in relation to the proper use of the Organizations' resources as well as their economic, efficient and effective use.
- **They also play a significant role** in assisting the Organizations to improve their operations and their internal control activities. The findings and recommendations of Panel Members are taken seriously, and the status of recommendations is closely monitored to ensure timely and effective implementation.

Global Compact for Migration

- **About the Marrakech Compact on Migration:** In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016, the General Assembly decided to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- **The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** sets out a common, comprehensive approach to international migration.
- **The GCM is a voluntary**, non-binding document that introduces no additional obligations to states. It is a global agreement setting out a common framework, shared principles and best practices on international migration.
- **It aims at cooperation** between states and promotes measures to strengthen regular migration pathways, to tackle irregular migration, and to protect human rights of migrants among other objectives.
- **The compact includes 23 objectives** and a set of possible actions for each one, from which governments can draw in responding to the issue. Notably, the Global Compact establishes a United Nations mechanism allowing Governments and companies to contribute technical, financial and human resources for implementing it.
- **The global compact is framed consistent** with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.
- **Opposition:** The US quit negotiations early on, in December 2017, and was followed by Hungary seven months later. Dominican Republic, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Israel, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia also refused to sign the document.
- **Why is it being opposed?** States with a restrictive migration agenda, such as Hungary, consider the symbolic act of approving the GCM as a sign that they are promoting migration.
- **Those that have rejected** it fear it will turn into common practice, or even common law. While not legally binding, it should be a politically guiding framework, which sets out ground rules for the long term. Some states that have rejected the GCM are especially worried about human rights references within the document. In their view, an emphasis on human rights contradicts what matters for them: securing borders.
- **Need for a global compact:** Over 250 million migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world's entire population, but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic production (GDP). Migrants remittance is huge contributor to their home countries' development.

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)

- **Background:** SWIFT India is a joint venture of top Indian public and private sector banks and SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication). The company was created to deliver high quality domestic financial messaging services to the Indian financial community. Bhattacharya said the venture has a huge potential to contribute significantly to the financial community in many domains.
- **What is SWIFT?** The SWIFT is a global member-owned cooperative that is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. It was founded in 1973 by a group of 239 banks from 15 countries which formed a co-operative utility to develop a secure electronic messaging service and common standards to facilitate cross-border payments. It carries an average of approximately 26 million financial messages each day. In order to use its messaging services, customers need to connect to the SWIFT environment.
- **Functions:** SWIFT does not facilitate funds transfer: rather, it sends payment orders, which must be settled by correspondent accounts that the institutions have with each other. The SWIFT is a secure financial message carrier — in other words, it transports messages from one bank to its intended bank recipient.
- **Its core role** is to provide a secure transmission channel so that Bank A knows that its message to Bank B goes to Bank B and no one else. Bank B, in turn, knows that Bank A, and no one other than Bank A, sent, read or altered the message en route. Banks, of course, need to have checks in place before actually sending messages.
- **Significance of SWIFT:** Messages sent by SWIFT's customers are authenticated using its specialised security and identification technology. Encryption is added as the messages leave the customer environment and enter the SWIFT Environment. Messages remain in the protected SWIFT environment, subject to all its confidentiality and integrity commitments, throughout the transmission process while they are transmitted to the operating centres (OPCs) where they are processed — until they are safely delivered to the receiver.

'Eco-sensitive zones'

- **The court took** the initiative after its amicus curiae informed the court that the State governments have taken no effort to protect the area around these sanctuaries and parks.
- **What are Eco-sensitive zones?** The Environment Protection Act, 1986 does not mention the word "Eco-sensitive Zones". The section 3(2)(v) of the Act, says that Central Government can restrict areas in which any industries, operations or processes shall not be carried out or shall be carried out subject to certain safeguards
- **Besides the section 5 (1)** of this act says that central government can prohibit or restrict the location of industries and carrying on certain operations or processes on the basis of considerations like the biological diversity of an area, maximum allowable limits of concentration of pollutants for an area, environmentally compatible land use, and proximity to protected areas.
- **The above two clauses** have been effectively used by the government to declare Eco-Sensitive Zones or Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFA). The same criteria have been used by the government to declare No Development Zones.
- **Criteria:** The MoEF (Ministry of Environment & Forests) has approved a comprehensive set of guidelines laying down parameters and criteria for declaring ESAs. A committee constituted by MoEF put this together. The guidelines lay out the criteria based on which areas can be declared as ESAs. These include Species Based (Endemism, Rarity etc), Ecosystem Based (sacred groves, frontier forests etc) and Geomorphologic feature based (uninhabited islands, origins of rivers etc).

Online portal "ENSURE"

- **Union Minister** of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare launched a portal ENSURE – National Livestock Mission-EDEG developed by NABARD and operated under the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries.
- **Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation (EDEG):** Under the Mission's component EDEG, subsidy payment for activities related to poultry, small ruminants, pigs etc., through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) goes directly to the beneficiary's account. To make it better, simpler and transparent, the NABARD has developed an online portal "ENSURE" which makes the information related to beneficiary and processing of application readily available.
- **Benefits:** The flow of information/funds will be quicker and more accountable. The burden of extra interest due to delay in the disbursal of the subsidy would now be reduced. Accessing the portal will be on real-time basis and list of beneficiaries can be easily prepared.

Vision of a New India – USD 5 Trillion Economy

- **The Ministry of Commerce & Industry** is creating an action-oriented plan which highlights specific sector level interventions to bolster India's march towards becoming a USD 5 trillion economy before 2025. Services sector – USD 3 trillion, Manufacturing sector – USD 1 trillion, and Agriculture sector – USD 1 trillion.
- **Impact on Services Sector:** The share of India's services sector in global services exports was 3.3% in 2015 compared to 3.1% in 2014. Based on this initiative, a goal of 4.2% has been envisaged for 2022. As the Services sector contributes significantly to India's GDP, exports and job creation, increased productivity and competitiveness of the Champion Services Sectors will further boost exports of various services. Embedded services are substantial part of 'Goods' as well. Thus, competitive services sector will add to the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector as well.
- **Promotion of Trade:** Commerce Ministry is closely working with the Finance Ministry to ease credit flow to the export sector, especially small exporters to ensure adequate availability of funds to them. The Commerce Minister has identified 15 strategic overseas locations where the Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) are proposed to be created.
- **Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES):** TIES aid with setting up and up-gradation of infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, etc. The Central and State Agencies, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ authorities and apex trade bodies recognized under the EXIM policy of Government of India, are eligible for financial support under this scheme.
- **India Improves Ranking in Ease of Doing Business:** India had made a leap of 23 ranks in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Ranking this year (2018) to be ranked at 77. India now ranks first in Ease of Doing Business Report among South Asian countries compared to 6th in 2014.
- **Multi-Modal Logistics Parks Policy (MMLPs):** MMLPs is to improve the country's logistics sector by lowering over freight costs, reducing vehicular pollution and congestion and cutting warehouse costs with a view to promoting movements of goods for domestic and global trade.
- **Reasons for Improvement in Ease of Doing Business:** To support start-ups and lower tax rates for MSMEs quicker environmental clearances from 600 days to 140 days has been implemented, Abolition of inter-state check post after implementation of GST has been done, Enhanced input tax credit and electronic GST network has been put in place and the creation of commercial courts to fast track enforcement of contracts and faster security clearances has lent support to the start-ups in the country. Among BRICS countries, India improved its rank from 5th (in 2010) to 3rd (in 2018).
- **Twenty-One regulatory** changes have been made for ease of doing business for start-ups.
- **To optimize resource** utilization and enhance the efficiency of the manufacturing sector, DIPP launched the Industrial Information System (IIS), a GIS-enabled database of industrial areas and clusters across the country in May 2017.

UAE to double women's representation in Federal National Council to 50 per cent:

- **The United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has decided to increase the representation of Emirati women in the Federal National Council from 22.5 per cent to 50 per cent from the coming Parliamentary term.
- **Hand-in-Hand Military exercise:** The seventh edition Hand-in-Hand Military exercise between India, China is being held in Chengdu, China. The main focus is on counter-terrorism operations. It will involve tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorist environment under UN mandate.



Year End Review 2018 – Ministry of Power

- **9 States achieve 100 % household** electrification under Saubhagya; total 16 states have 100 % household electrification now
- **More than 2 crore electricity** connections released under Saubhagya and 100 per cent village electrification achieved under DDUGJY
- **Energy deficit reduced** to almost zero and India emerges as net exporter of electricity to Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar
- **31.68 crore LED bulbs** distributed under UJALA scheme and 74.79 lakh LED street lights have been installed

India's rank improved to 24 in 2018 from 137 in 2014 on World Bank's Ease of doing business - "Getting Electricity" Ranking

- **Access to reliable** and affordable energy supply is an important factor affecting the quality of life and economic development in any country. Therefore, the Government is committed to ensure 24*7 power supply for all by 31st March, 2019.
- **Towards this goal**, many important milestones have been achieved and the year 2018 has been historic for electricity reached every village on 28th April, 2018 under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY). Now focus is on electrifying every household under Saubhagya. With 9 states already reaching 100 % household electrification, this target will also be achieved well before its deadline.
- **Several steps** have been taken to reform and strengthen the power sector as a whole including power generation, transmission and distribution.
- **These also include** not only achievements in capacity addition but also important reforms being undertaken on increasing energy efficiency and increasing accountability and transparency by launching Mobile applications like PRAAPTI, Ash Track etc.

SAUBHAGYA

- **Launched** for universal electrification in September, 2017 Camps organised at village level. Minimum documentation required Special drive for economically weaker sections under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan Over 2.1 crore households electrified since 11th Oct, 2017
- **9 States** have achieved 100% saturation in household electrification under Saubhagya namely Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Bihar, J&K, Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Sikkim, Telangana and West Bengal.
- **Thus total** 16 States in the country now have 100 % household electrification. Many more State like Maharashtra, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh etc. are left with small number of un-electrified households and expected to achieve saturation any time.
- **Nation expected** to achieve 100 % household electrification by 31st December, 2018
- **Achievement under Saubhagya during January to November 2018** Number of households electrified – more than 2 Crore Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGKY) 100 per cent village electrification achieved Outlay of Rs. 75,893 crore 2,58,870 km HT and LT lines 4.10.146 distribution transformers

Generation capacity

- **Around 1,07,000 MW** Generation Capacity has been added till October 2018 since April 2014. All India Generation Installed Capacity has increased by 39.2% from 2,48,554 MW as on 31.3.2014 to 3,46,048 MW as on 31.10.2018.
- **India emerges** as net exporter of electricity. 7203 MU supplied to Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar in FY 2017-18 and 4628 MU in current year 2018-19 (Upto October 2018).
- **Energy deficit** reduced from 4.2% in FY 2013-14 to 0.6% in Current FY 2018-19 (Upto October 2018). Peak Deficit also reduced from 4.5% in FY 2013-14 to 0.8% in Current FY 2018-19 (Upto October 2018).
- **Peak Demand Met** has increased by 35.2% to 1,75,528 MW during the current year (April-October 2018) from 1,29,815 MW during same period in 2013-14. Energy Availability has also increased by 35.2% to 764.627 BU during the current year (April-October 2018) from 565.698 BU during same period in 2013-14.
- **One Grid One Nation** (Achievements till Oct, 2018) Expansion of transmission grid by 1,11,433 ckm from 2014-15 to 2018-19 (11,799 ckm added in FY 2018-19) Transformation capacity addition of 3,38,202 MVA from 2014-15 to 2018-19 (41,790 MVA added in FY 2018-19)
- **26 projects** worth Rs. 48,426 crore awarded through Tariff Based Competitive Bidding from 2014-15 to 2018-19. Inter-regional transfer capacity addition more than tripled from 16,000 MW in FY 2010-14 to 54,700 MW during FY 2014-15 to 2018-19 (4,200 MW added in FY 2018-19).

Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS)

- **Outlay of Rs. 65,424 crore** 1378 towns IT enabled 1900 additional towns under progress Installation of 43,449 Km HT and LT lines completed out of the total 1,30,348 Km of awarded quantity
- **Installation** of 28,193 distribution transformers completed out of the total 58,145 no. of awarded quantity
- **UDAY** More than Rs.34,000 Crores interest cost saved by DISCOMs under UDAY within two years. Reduction in AT&C losses in 22 States within two years of operation. AT&C losses have come down to 18.76% in FY18 as compared to 20.77% in FY16. Revenue gaps bridged by 72 per cent within two years operation of UDAY. The national level ACS-ARR gaps are at 17 paise/unit in FY18 as compared to 60 paise/unit in FY16.
- **India's rank** improved to 24 in 2018 from 137 in 2014 on World Bank's Ease of doing business - "Getting Electricity" Ranking.
- **Focus on North-East region-** Rs. 9865.75 crore projects in progress for strengthening / development of intra-state transmission & distribution systems in NER (including Sikkim). Electrification of 6379 villages and intensive electrification of 9822 villages completed.
- **130 towns IT enabled.** 68.76 lakh LED bulbs distributed under UJALA scheme 99,895 LED streetlights installed under the SLNP scheme Rs. 9866 crore projects undertaken for strengthening/development of intra-state transmission 4376 MW hydel capacity addition (FY 2014-18)

Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservaton

- **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LED for All (UJALA)** 31.68 crore LED bulbs distributed under UJALA scheme resulting in estimated cost saving of INR 16,457 crore per year, estimated energy savings of 41.14 billion kWh per year with avoided peak demand of 8,237 MW and GHG emission reduction of 33.32 million t CO2 per year.
- **88 percent reduction** in LED bulb procurement cost through demand aggregation Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) To replace 1.34 crore conventional streetlights with smart and energy efficient LED street lights by March, 2019.

- **74.79 lakh LED street** lights have been installed resulting in estimated energy savings of 5.02 billion kWh per year with avoided peak demand of 837 MW and GHG emission reduction of 3.46 million t CO₂ per year

Transport Sector

- **National E-Mobility Programme** launched to provide an impetus to the entire e-mobility ecosystem including vehicle manufacturers, charging infrastructure companies, fleet operators, service providers, etc.
- **No licence required for charging stations** Procurement of 10,000 e-cars concluded for Government institutions 902 e-cars have been deployed/under registration
- **BEE Star Labelling** The Chiller Star Labelling Program has been launched by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to encourage the deployment of Energy Efficient chiller systems. The program envisages providing star rating in terms of its energy performance. Initially, the program is launched on voluntary basis and will be valid upto 31' December 2020.
- **LED and inverter AC** have been notified under mandatory regime. Star labelling program for Variable speed Air Conditioners and LED lamps were notified in mandatory domain during the year 2017. The implementation of the same has begun w.e.f 1st January, 2018.
- **Star labelling program** saved energy worth INR 22,500 crore during the year 2017-18

Industrial Energy Efficiency

- **Energy efficiency measures through PAT** in large industries saved energy worth Rs. 9500 crore annually. Notification of PAT cycle IV for 846 DCs from 13 sectors has been issued Building Energy Efficiency
- **Energy Conservation Guidelines** launched for large scale industries to promote equipment efficiency by reducing energy consumption with the help of standardizing the energy performance values of various energy-consuming equipment and systems deployed for the manufacturing process.

Digital initiatives-

- **Enabling payments** through NPCI platforms such as BHIM, BBPS, Bharat QR etc. More than 24 crore digital transactions in FY 2017-18 for electricity bill payments.
- **To bring** transparency and to disseminate information to public at large following Apps are launched by the Ministry of Power: PRAAPTI: A Web portal and an App namely PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement) for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators), www.praapti.in, has been officially launched.
- **Ash Track-** linking fly ash users and power plants for better ash utilisation. A Web based monitoring System and a Fly Ash mobile application named ASH TRACK. These platforms will enable better management of the ash produced by thermal power plants by providing an interface between fly ash producers (Thermal Power Plants) and potential ash users such as – road contractors, cement plants etc.

Fighting pollution:

- **Ministry of Power** has issued a policy to use 5-10% of biomass pellets along with coal for power generation in thermal power plants.
- **To promote use of the Biomass pellets**, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has written to all Central/State Utilities, State Governments, Power Equipment Manufacturers/Integrated Power Producers/Generating Companies that all fluidized bed and pulverized coal units of power generating utilities (coal based thermal power plants) except those having ball and tube mill, shall endeavour to use 5-10% blend of Biomass pellets made, primarily, of agro residue along with coal after assessing the technical feasibility, viz., the safety aspects etc.
- **Reforms In order to encourage Renewable Generation**, Ministry of Power extended the waiver of ISTS Transmission charges and losses for Solar and Wind based Projects upto March 2022.
- **In order to achieve the Renewable target** of 1,75,000 MW of Renewable capacity by 2022, MOP issued Long Term Growth trajectory Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) for Solar as well as Non-Solar till the year 2022. With the aim of promoting renewable generation and reduction of emission, MOP issued a scheme on Flexibility in generation and scheduling of Thermal Power Stations to reduce emissions.
- **MoP has issued a direction** to the CERC under section 107 of the Electricity Act, 2003 on 30th May, 2018 for implementation of new Environmental Norms for Thermal Power Plants suggested by MOEF&CC.
- **In order** to reduce the overall cost of generation as well as cost of power to consumer (Company level merit order operation), MOP issued a scheme on Flexibility in generation and scheduling of Thermal Power Stations to reduce cost of power to consumers.
- **In our endeavor** for revival of the stressed assets, a Pilot Scheme was introduced by MOP in April 2018 to facilitate procurement of aggregated power of 2500 MW for 3 (three) years (covered under medium term) from the generating companies having coal based Power Plants which are already commissioned without having a power purchase agreement for the quantum of power the Bidder is willing to bid.
- **Major reform** initiatives are being taken by Ministry of Power which includes addressing various issues being faced by electricity sector through draft amendments proposed in Electricity Act 2003 and Tariff Policy, 2016. Draft amendments to Electricity Act were circulated for stakeholder comments on 7.9.2018 and draft Amendments to Tariff Policy were circulated for Stakeholder comments on 30.5.2018.

Saubhagya scheme

- **About SAUBHAGYA Scheme:** Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – 'Saubhagya' was launched in September, 2017. Under Saubhagya free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.
- **Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya scheme.** The scheme aims to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country.
- **All DISCOMs** including Private Sector DISCOMs, State Power Departments and RE Cooperative Societies shall be eligible for financial assistance under the scheme in line with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY). Eligibility: The prospective beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme would be identified using SECC 2011 data. However, un-electrified households not covered under SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.
- **Scope of the Scheme:** Providing last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all un-electrified households in rural areas. Providing Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) based standalone system for un-electrified households located in remote and inaccessible villages / habitations, where grid extension is not feasible or cost effective.
- **Providing** last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining economically poor un-electrified households in urban areas. Non-poor urban households are excluded from this scheme.

National Register of Citizens (NRC)

- **Background:** The Assam government released the final draft of NRC on July 30, 2018. The list incorporates names of 2.89 crore people out of 3.29 crore applicants. The names of 40.07 lakh people have been left out.

- **Assam NRC:** The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a list that contains names of Indian citizens of Assam. It was last prepared after Census in 1951. Assam, which had faced an influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC.
- **The Assam government** on July 30, 2018 released the second and final draft of the state's National Register of Citizens (NRC). The draft includes the names of Indian citizens who have been residing in Assam before March 25, 1971.

Rohingya refugees

- **Background:** India signed a development programme for Rakhine State in Myanmar late last year which was designed to assist the Myanmar government in Rakhine State to build housing infrastructure for displaced persons.
- **More than 700,000** minority Rohingya Muslims fled from Myanmar's Rakhine state to neighbouring Bangladesh since August 2017 after a military crackdown, triggering a massive refugee crisis.
- **Who are Rohingyas?** They are an Ethnic group, mostly Muslims. They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar. They were classified as "resident foreigners or associate citizens". They speak a dialect of Bengali and not Burmese. Ethnically they are much closer to Indo-Aryan people of India and Bangladesh than to the Sino-Tibetans of the Country.
- **What's the issue?** Few years ago, religious and ethnic tensions between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists (who make up the majority of the population in Myanmar) escalated into widespread, deadly rioting. Hundreds of thousands were forced to flee. Since then, ongoing violent attacks have forced even more people to leave their homes.
- **The Myanmar Government** says that Rohingya people are not Burmese citizens – but the Rohingya have been living in Myanmar for generations. Today, they are a people with no home or citizenship. Rohingya people are being widely abused and exploited. They are one of the most persecuted minorities in the world.

What Are Britain's 'Golden Visas'?

- **What are Golden Visas or Tier 1 Visas?** They provide a faster route for wealthy investors coming from outside the European Union and Switzerland to settle in Britain. The program was introduced in 2008 to attract wealthy foreign nationals willing to invest large amounts of capital in Britain.
- **Criteria:** To qualify, foreign nationals must put down a minimum of 2 million pounds (around \$2.5 million) as an investment in Britain. Such an investment in United Kingdom bonds, share capital or companies allows investors to apply for permanent residency within five years.
- **For a £5 million investment**, they can apply for permanent residency after three years. An investment of £10 million can open the door to permanent residency after two years. After that, the nationals theoretically could apply for citizenship.
- **Criticisms:** Billions of pounds have poured into London over the past decade, following an influx of global elites who have benefited from the program. The visa program has always had its critics, with anticorruption campaigners railing against Britain's openness to ill-gotten riches from overseas and the foreigners who invest them.
- **A survey found** that the scheme brought limited economic benefits because most of the investors had bought fixed-interest loan securities known as gilts, meaning that they were effectively loaning the government money instead of investing in the country.

Water traces found on asteroid Bennu

- **About the mission:** OSIRIS-Rex stands for Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer. OSIRIS-REx is the third mission in NASA's New Frontiers program, which previously sent the New Horizons spacecraft zooming by Pluto and the Juno spacecraft into orbit around Jupiter.

- **Scientific Mission Goals:** During its three year orbit of Bennu, OSIRIS-REx will be conducting a range of scientific experiments in order to better understand the asteroid. The aim of the mission is to collect a sample of regolith- the loose, soil-like material which covers the surface of the asteroid.
- **Why was Bennu chosen?** Bennu was selected for a the OSIRIS-REx mission from over 500,000 known asteroids, due to it fitting a number of key criteria. These include: Proximity to Earth: In order for OSIRIS-REx to reach its destination in a reasonable timeframe, NASA needed to find an asteroid which had a similar orbit to Earth.
- **Size:** Small asteroids, those less than 200m in diameter, typically spin much faster than larger asteroids, meaning the regolith material can be ejected into space. Bennu is around 500m in diameter, so rotates slowly enough to ensure that the regolith stays on its surface.
- **Composition:** Bennu is a primitive asteroid, meaning it hasn't significantly changed since the beginning of the Solar System (over 4 billion years ago). It is also very carbon-rich, meaning it may contain organic molecules, which could have been precursors to life on Earth.
- **Additionally,** Bennu is of interest as it is a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA). Every 6 years, Bennu's orbit brings it within 200,000 miles of the Earth, which means it has a high probability of impacting Earth in the late 22nd Century.

UN 'Momentum for Change' climate action award

- **The other 14 projects** which won the UN 'Momentum for Change' climate action award showcase how ideas, big and small, are successful in tackling climate change.
- **About HelpUsGreen:** The project collects flowers from temples and mosques across many cities/towns in Uttar Pradesh and recycles them to produce natural incense, organic fertilizers and biodegradable packaging material.
- **The project currently** employs 1,260 women in Uttar Pradesh, helps in preventing chemical pesticides from entering into the river through temple waste. Developed as the world's first profitable solution to the monumental temple waste problem, the HelpUsGreen's products are handcrafted by women who earlier used to be manual scavengers.
- **The HelpUsGreen** aims to provide livelihoods to 5,100 women and recycle 51 tonnes of temple waste daily by 2021. Under HelpUsGreen, 11,060 metric tonnes of temple-waste has, so far, been recycled. As a result, 110 metric tonnes of chemical pesticides that enter the river through temple waste have been offset.
- **About 'Momentum for Change' initiative:** Momentum for Change is an initiative spearheaded by the UN Climate Change secretariat to shine a light on the enormous groundswell of activities underway across the globe that are moving the world toward a highly resilient, low-carbon future. Momentum for Change recognizes innovative and transformative solutions that address both climate change and wider economic, social and environmental challenges.

FAME-India Scheme

- **To promote manufacturing of electric** and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same, Department of Heavy Industry is implementing FAME-India Scheme Phase – I [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India] from 1st April 2015.
- **The scheme** was initially up to 31st April 2017, has been extended up to 31st March 2019 or till Notification of FAME-II, whichever is earlier.
- **FAME-India Scheme Phase – II:** The scheme proposes to give a push to electric vehicles (EVs) in public transport and it seeks to encourage adoption of EVs by way of market creation and demand aggregation.
- **Automobile Sector:** 100% FDI by automatic route is permitted in the automobile sector. Further, the sector is deregulated, both private sector and public sector are free to carry out investment in the automobile sector, including for manufacturing of Electric Vehicles and E-Buses.
- **Background:** FAME India is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. Main thrust of FAME is to encourage electric vehicles by providing subsidies. Vehicles in most segments – two wheelers, three wheelers, electric and hybrid cars and electric buses obtained the subsidy benefit of the scheme.
- **FAME focuses on 4 areas** i.e. Technology development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure.

Indian Navy- Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle:

- **Context:** The Indian Navy has inducted its first Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV) System at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai. With this, the Indian Navy joins a select group of naval forces in the world that boasts of this niche capability.
- **DSRV** is used to rescue crew members stranded in submarines that get disabled. The DSRV can be operated at a depth of 650 meters and can hold around 15 people.
- **India's first Jean Monnet CoE opened at MAHE:** Context: India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, established by the European Union, was recently inaugurated at the Department of European Studies (DES) in Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE).
- **It comes with grant of €1,00,000** to pursue India-EU interdisciplinary studies in culture, literature, education and society.
- **Who is Jean Monnet?** A French political economist and diplomat, Jean Monnet was influential supporter of European unity and is considered as one of founding fathers of European Union. He also has been called "The Father of Europe" by those who see his innovative and pioneering efforts in the 1950s as the key to establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, the predecessor of today's European Union.

Universal Health Coverage Day- December 12:

- **Context:** International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day) on 12 December aims to mobilize diverse stakeholders to call for stronger, more equitable health systems to achieve universal health coverage, leaving no one behind.
- **The theme of World Health Day is:** Universal health coverage: everyone, everywhere.
- **What is Universal Health Coverage?** Universal health coverage (UHC) ensures all people, everywhere, can access the quality health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It is a fundamentally political goal rooted in the human right to health. It is also one of the smartest investments any country can make.

World's first floating nuclear plant in Russia:

- **Akademik Lomonosov** is the world's first "floating" nuclear power plant (FNPP). It is coming up in Russia.
- **Key facts:** An FNPP is basically a mobile, low-capacity reactor unit operable in remote areas isolated from the main power distribution system, or in places hard to access by land. They are designed to maintain both uninterrupted power and plentiful desalinated water supply in remote areas.



Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC)

- **Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC)** Directorate is an attached office of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, provides quality assurance services in the area of Electronics and IT through countrywide network of laboratories and centres. The services include Testing, Calibration, IT & e-Governance, Training and Certification to public and private organizations.
- **STQC laboratories** are having national/International accreditation and recognitions in the area of testing and calibration.
- **Besides testing** and calibration STQC has specialized institutions such as Indian Institute of Quality Management (IIQM) for quality related training programs. Centre for Reliability (CFR) for reliability related services and Centre for Electronics Test Engineering (CETEs) for skill based trainings.
- **In the area of IT & e-Governance**, STQC provides assurance services through its IT Centres for Software Quality testing, Information Security and IT Service Management by conducting testing, training, audit and certifications. STQC is responsible for maintaining eGov standards. Based on this concept a Conformity Assessment Framework (CAF) for e-Governance project has also been developed and is in operation. Two IT test laboratories, at Bangalore and Kolkata, have received accreditation from American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) being the first outside the USA.
- **Vision & Mission Vision** Be a Quality Assurance service organization to enhance processes and competitiveness of IT and electronics industry enabling them to deliver products and services of global standards.
- **Mission** To support industry and trade and protect consumer interest in electronic and IT sector by providing customer centric, accredited quality assurance services as per international standard for global acceptance.
- **Objectives** Become a key player in national measurement assurance system by providing test & calibration facilities in emerging technologies Support national eGovernance Plan (NeGP) through Quality & Security evaluations of IT systems and other projects of national importance Providing certification services to industry for processes and products for global compliance Enhancement of knowledge of professionals in the area of quality management and test engineering Provide services in professional manner by enhancing internal efficiency

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was approved by the Government in May 2006, with the following vision:

- **"Make all Government Services** accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man".
- **As part of NeGP approval**, the Union Cabinet assigned some key tasks associated with Programme Management of NeGP to Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) including arrangements for monitoring and coordinating implementation of NeGP, evolving standards and policy guidelines, providing technical and handholding support, undertaking Capacity Building, R&D, etc.
- **The Capacity Building Scheme** under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) also envisions establishment of an institutional framework for state-level decision-making including setting-up of State e-Mission Teams (SeMTs) having relevant expertise and experience to provide technical and professional support to States and Union Territories.
- **Since implementation** of NeGP entailed enhanced responsibilities for MeitY, it was proposed that a suitable institutional mechanism be devised to enable Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology to engage competent resources from the open market as well as within the Government.
- **NeGD was accordingly** created by MeitY in 2009 as an Independent Business Division (IBD) within Media Lab Asia (MLAsia) (a Section 8 Company under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology).
- **Immediate tasks for NeGD include the following:** Programme Management of NeGP, inter-alia including facilitating and supporting DIT in undertaking the following tasks and responsibilities assigned to MeitY under NeGP.

- **Facilitating implementation** of NeGP by various Ministries and State Governments. Providing technical assistance to Central Ministries and State Line Departments. Serving as a secretariat to the Apex Committee.
- **Undertaking technical appraisal** of all NeGP projects to examine issues such as overall technology architecture, framework, standards, security policy, service delivery mechanism, sharing of common infrastructure etc. Human Resource Development, Training and Awareness Building.
- **Framing core policies, technical assistance**, R&D, awareness and assessment and creation of organization structure.> Acting as a Central Agency for an effective implementation of Capacity Building Scheme inter-alia involving provisioning of manpower at various SeMTs across States/ UTs.
- **Positioning of a Capacity Building Management Cell** for effective management of manpower at SeMTs together with management of other Scheme activities including training, setting up HR policies, etc. Present Status: NeGD is an Independent Business Division (IBD) established by MeitY within MLAsia to undertake Programme Management of NeGP, having the following features: This Division enjoys complete financial and HR autonomy from the rest of MLAsia. Government personnel in NeGD are taken on deputation to MLAsia. NeGD has its own head as President and CEO.
- **The selection process** for both Government and private sector personnel is common for ensuring uniform quality and suitability of personnel. Government funds for managing specific e-Governance projects/programmes as identified by MeitY are transferred directly to the Division, subject to extant rules in this regard.
- **NeGD acts as one of the key catalysts** and integrators for initiatives under Mission Mode Projects and support components under NeGP 2.0 across the country. NeGD is also expected to proactively support central ministries / departments / state governments in propagation of their e-Governance initiatives.

ERNET

- **ERNET was initiated** in 1986 by the Department of Electronics (DoE), with funding support from the Government of India and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), involving eight premier institutions as participating agencies NCST (National Centre for Software Technology) Bombay, IISc (Indian Institute of Science) Bangalore, five IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology) at Delhi, Bombay, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Madras, and the DoE, New Delhi. ERNET began as a multi protocol network with both the TCP/IP and the OSI-IP protocol stacks running over the backbone. Since 1995, however, almost all traffic is carried over TCP/IP.
- **ERNET (Education and Research Network)** has made a significant contribution to the emergence of networking in the country. It practically brought the Internet to India and has built up national capabilities in the area of net-working, especially in protocol software engineering. It has not only succeeded in building a large network that provides various facilities to the intellectual segment of Indian society-the research and education community, it has over the years become a trendsetter in the field of networking. UNDP has lauded ERNET as one of the most successful programmes it has funded. The Govt. of India has committed itself to further strengthen the project by including it in the 9th Plan with the allocation of funds and by creation of a new organisational set-up in the form of a Society. The Science community of the country has also recognized ERNET's contribution both for infrastructure services as well as for R&D. In 1998, it became an autonomous scientific society - ERNET India under the administrative control of Ministry of Information Technology, Govt. of India.

SAMEER

- **SAMEER was set up as an autonomous R & D laboratory** at Mumbai under the then Department of Electronics, Government of India with a broad mandate to undertake R & D work in the areas of Microwave Engineering and Electromagnetic Engineering Technology. It is an offshoot of the special microwave products unit (SMPU) set up in 1977 at the TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH (TIFR), Mumbai. SAMEER, Mumbai was setup in 1984.
- **The centre of Electromagnetics**, Chennai of the then Department of Electronics (DOE) was merged with SAMEER in 1987. SAMEER Kolkata centre was set up in 1994 for research & Development in Millimetrewave Technology. A new centre is being established at Navi Mumbai campus of SAMEER for augmentation of EM/EMC FACILITY for CE Marking of Electronics products.
- **The Vision** To achieve excellence in application oriented research in the areas of Microwave /RF Electronics and Electromagnetics. The Mission Research & Development activities in the areas of its expertise. Engage in product development driven by technology and user requirement. Develop expertise in areas of competence. Create business division and to make it commercially viable in the long run Become multi disciplinary institution and to cater to diversified applications for Rf and microwave areas Undertake training and consultancy in areas of competence. Keep pace with rapidly changing technology by continuous training of its manpower Become a non hierarchical organization empowering people at all levels with appropriate authority and accountability
- **Quality** SAMEER is committed to meeting user agencies requirement by providing world-class technology and services. Continuous improvement and teamwork will guide our pursuit for excellence.

- **R & D Centers Mumbai** SAMEER, Mumbai is pursuing research and development in the field of Opto electronics, medical Electronics, Radar based instrumentation, Atmospheric Remote sensing & Meteorology, RF & Microwave systems and components, Navigational electronics etc. Many of its R&D outputs and spin-offs have found applications and acceptance in industry .
- **Chennai** SAMEER-CEM, Chennai is pursuing Research and Development, Consultancy, test and evaluation services in the areas of electromagnetics and antennas, EMI/EMC, communications and thermal management. Kolkata SAMEER, Kolkata , the youngest of the three Centres is pursuing R&D activities in the area of antennas, electromagnetics, RF/Microwave components and subsystems.
- **Milestones** SAMEER has been a pioneer in the development of technology in several areas. It has developed: India's first MST Radar which is also the 2nd largest in the world. India's first indigenously developed Linear Accelerator for Cancer treatment. Energy efficient Drying/Heating System for textile, Food, Ceramic, Chemical, Pharma, Rubber applications through RF/Microwave. Microwave dis-infection system for hazardous hospital waste. Code division multiple access [CDMA] receiver.
- **Microwave data link system [MDLS] for user agency.** Broad-band sleeve monopole antenna . Wireless frequency hopping UHF data link. It has established: India's first center for design and engineering facility for Opto Electronic devices.
- **Class ten thousand** clean room facility for space electronics hardware development. Full-fledged EMI/EMC test & evaluation facility for CE marking. RF/Microwave Antenna Measurement test facility. Thermal design and engineering facility.

Telecom Disputes Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)

- **The Telecom Disputes Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** also set aside a rule in the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) predatory pricing regulation that required top telcos to report all tariffs in the interests of transparency and non-discrimination.
- **About TDSAT:** In order to bring in functional clarity and strengthen the regulatory framework and the disputes settlement mechanism in the telecommunication sector, the TRAI Act of 1997 was amended in the year 2000 and TDSAT was set up to adjudicate disputes and dispose of appeals with a view to protect the interests of service providers and consumers of the telecom sector.
- **In January 2004**, the Government included broadcasting and cable services also within the purview of TRAI Act. The jurisdiction of TDSAT stands extended to matters that lay before the Cyber Appellate Tribunal and also the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority Appellate Tribunal.
- **Composition of TDSAT:** The Tribunal consists of a Chairperson and two Members appointed by the Central Government.
- **The Chairperson** should be or should have been a Judge of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice of a High Court. A Member should have held the post of Secretary to the Government of India or any equivalent post in the Central Government or the State Government for a period of not less than two years or a person who is well versed in the field of technology, telecommunication, industry, commerce or administration.
- **Powers and Jurisdiction:** The Tribunal exercises jurisdiction over Telecom, Broadcasting, IT and Airport tariff matters under the TRAI Act, 1997 (as amended), the Information Technology Act, 2008 and the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008.
- **The Tribunal exercises** original as well as appellate jurisdiction in regard to Telecom, Broadcasting and Airport tariff matters. In regard to Cyber matters the Tribunal exercises only the appellate jurisdiction.

Dam Safety Bill 2018

- **Why Centre is introducing this Bill?** Though the subject does not fall under the purview of Parliament, the Centre has decided to introduce this bill mainly because dam safety is an issue of concern in the country. And there are no legal and institutional safeguards in this regard.
- **Highlights of Dam Safety Bill, 2018:** The Bill provides for proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in the country to ensure their safe functioning.
- **The Bill provides** for constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety which shall evolve dam safety policies and recommend necessary regulations as may be required for the purpose. The Bill provides for establishment of National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body which shall discharge functions to implement the policy, guidelines and standards for dam safety in the country. The Bill provides for constitution of a State Committee on Dam Safety by State

Government.

- **Significance:** The Dam Safety Bill, 2018 will help all the States and Union Territories of India to adopt uniform dam safety procedures which shall ensure safety of dams and safeguard benefits from such dams. This shall also help in safeguarding human life, livestock and property.
- **It addresses** all issues concerning dam safety including regular inspection of dams, Emergency Action Plan, comprehensive dam safety review, adequate repair and maintenance funds for dam safety, Instrumentation and Safety Manuals. It lays onus of dam safety on the dam owner and provides for penal provisions for commission and omission of certain acts.
- **Need:** Over the last fifty years, India has invested substantially in dams and related infrastructures, and ranks third after USA and China in the number of large dams. 5254 large dams are in operation in the country currently and another 447 are under construction. In addition to this, there are thousands of medium and small dams.
- **While dams have played a key role** in fostering rapid and sustained agricultural growth and development in India, there has been a long felt need for a uniform law and administrative structure for ensuring dam safety.
- **The Central Water Commission**, through the National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS), Central Dam Safety Organization (CDSO) and State Dam Safety Organizations (SDSO) has been making constant endeavours in this direction, but these organizations do not have any statutory powers and are only advisory in nature.
- **This can be a matter of concern**, especially since about 75 percent of the large dams in India are more than 25 years old and about 164 dams are more than 100 years old. A badly maintained, unsafe dam can be a hazard to human life, flora and fauna, public and private assets and the environment. India has had 36 dam failures in the past.

Partners' Forum

- **The previous chapters** were held in Johannesburg, South Africa (2014), New Delhi, India (2010) and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2007). This is the second time India is hosting the Partners' Forum.
- **What is Partners' Forum?** Partners' Forum is a global health partnership launched in September 2005 to accelerate efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, improve adolescent, child, newborn and maternal health.
- **An alliance:** This partnership is an alliance of more than 1,000 plus members, across 10 constituencies in 92 countries: academic, research and teaching institutions; donors and foundations; health care professionals; multilateral agencies; non-governmental organizations; partner countries; global financing mechanisms and the private sector.
- **PMNCH's mission** is to support the global health community to work successfully towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the health related SDGs. The programme of the Partners' Forum will be framed around the objectives of the Global Strategy of Survive – Thrive – Transform.

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission

- **The Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM)** is under implementation across the country (launched in 2016). It is a unique programme, designed to deliver catalytic interventions to rural areas on the threshold of growth.
- **Funding Support:** There is a funding support of up to 30% of the estimated investment for each Rurban cluster, given as Critical Gap Funding (CGF), while 70% of the funds is mobilized by the States through convergence with synergic State and Central programmes and private investment and institutional funding.
- **The CGF** is now shared between the Centre and the State in a ratio of 60:40 for Plain area States and 90:10 for Himalayan and NE States.
- **Various Provisions:** Provision of basic amenities – Provision of 24/7 Water Supply to all households, Solid and Liquid Waste Management facilities at the household and cluster level Provision of Inter and Intra village roads –
- **Adequate Street Lights and Public Transport facilities using green technologies Provision of Economic Amenities** – Various thematic areas in the sectors of Agri Services and Processing, Tourism, and Skill development to promote Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

- **Background:** As per Census of India Statistics, the rural population in India stands at 833 million, constituting almost 68% of the total population. The rural population has shown a growth of 12% during the 2001-2011 period and there has been an increase in the absolute number of villages during the same period.
- **Large parts of rural areas** are not stand-alone settlements but part of a cluster of settlements, which are relatively proximate to each other. These clusters typically illustrate potential for growth, have economic drivers and derive location and competitive advantages. Hence, making a case for concerted policy directives for such clusters; these clusters once developed can then be classified as 'Rurban'.
- **Mission's Objective:** The objective of the National Rurban Mission (NRuM) is to stimulate local economic development, enhance basic services, and create well planned Rurban clusters.

National Mission on Government e-Market (GeM) portal

- **The National Mission on GeM (NMG)** was launched on 5th September 2018 to accelerate the adoption and use of Procurement by Major Central Ministries, States and UTs and their agencies (including CPSUs/PSUs, Local Bodies) on the GeM platform.
- **Objectives of the NMG:** Promote inclusiveness by catapulting various categories of sellers and service providers Highlight and communicate 'value add' by way of transparency and efficiency in public procurement, including corruption free governance.
- **Achieve cashless,** contactless and paperless transaction, in line with the Digital India objectives. Increase overall efficiency leading to significant cost saving on government expenditure in Procurement. Maximizing ease in availability of all types of products and services bought by Government buyers.
- **Background:** GeM is a short form of one stop Government e-Market Place hosted by Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D) where common user goods and services can be procured. GeM has recorded about \$1.5 billion worth of transactions since it was launch 18 months ago.

Guidelines for ground water extraction

- **The guidelines** were revised in the wake of the directions issued by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to address various shortcomings in the existing guidelines of ground water extraction.
- **The revised guidelines provide for the:** Encouraged use of recycled and treated sewage water by industries. Provision of action against polluting industries. Mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders, with or without telemetry depending upon quantum of extraction.
- **Mandatory water audit** by industries abstracting ground water 500 m³/day or more in safe and semi-critical area and 200 m³/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units. Mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries. Measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects.
- **Exemptions under the revised guidelines:** The revised guidelines exempt the requirement of NOC for agricultural users, users employing non-energised means to extract water, individual households (using less than 1 inch diameter delivery pipe) and Armed Forces Establishments during operational deployment. Other exemptions have been granted to strategic and operational infrastructure projects for Armed Forces, Defence and Paramilitary Forces Establishments and Government water supply agencies.
- **Water Conservation Fee:** One of the important features of the revised guidelines is the introduction of the concept of Water Conservation Fee (WCF), the fee charged on extraction of ground water. The WCF payable varies with the category of the area, type of industry and the quantum of ground water extraction.
- **Implications of Water Conservation Fee:** The high rates of WCF are expected to discourage setting up of new industries in over-exploited and critical areas as well as may limit large scale ground water extraction by industries, especially in over-exploited and critical areas.
- **Background:** In India, extracted groundwater is mainly used for irrigation and accounts for about 228 BCM (billion cubic metre) — or about 90% of the annual groundwater extraction. The rest, 25 BCM, is drawn for drinking, domestic and industrial uses.
- **India is the largest user of groundwater** in the world, and accounts for about 25% of the global water extraction.

Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA)

- **The observations** are part of a major ALMA initiative known as the Disk Substructures at High Angular Resolution Project, or DSHARP campaign.
- **Significance of these observations:** According to the researchers, the most compelling interpretation of these observations is that large planets, likely similar in size and composition to Neptune or Saturn, form quickly, much faster than current theory would allow. It may also help explain how smaller rocky planets manage to survive in the chaos of young systems.
- **About ALMA telescope:** The Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) is an international partnership of the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS) of Japan, together with NRC (Canada), NSC and ASIAA (Taiwan), and KASI (Republic of Korea), in cooperation with the Republic of Chile.
- **ALMA is a single telescope of revolutionary design**, composed of 66 high precision antennas located on the Chajnantor plateau, 5000 meters altitude in northern Chile. ALMA allows scientists to unravel longstanding and important astronomical mysteries, in search of our Cosmic Origins.

Nasa's ICESat-2

- **The satellite** is measuring the height of sea ice to within an inch, tracing the terrain of previously unmapped Antarctic valleys, surveying remote ice sheets, and peering through forest canopies and shallow coastal waters.
- **With each pass of the ICESat-2 satellite**, the mission is adding to datasets tracking Earth's rapidly changing ice. Researchers are ready to use the information to study sea level rise resulting from melting ice sheets and glaciers, and to improve sea ice and climate forecasts.
- **Background:** As the name suggests, ICESat-2 is a follow-on project. The original spacecraft flew in the 2000s and pioneered the laser measurement of the height of polar glaciers and sea-ice from space. But the mission was plagued by technical problems that limited its observations to just a couple of months in every year.
- **About ICESat- 2 mission:** ICESat-2 will measure the average annual elevation change of land ice covering Greenland and Antarctica to within the width of a pencil, capturing 60,000 measurements every second.
- **ICESat-2's Advanced** Topographic Laser Altimeter System (ATLAS) measures height by timing how long it takes individual light photons to travel from the spacecraft to Earth and back.
- **Why is this mission important?** Antarctica and Greenland lose billions of tonnes of ice every year – the result largely of warm water being able to melt land glaciers where they meet the ocean. This wastage is slowly but surely pushing up sea-levels worldwide.



About dial.gov

- **The Government** is making special efforts to reach the marginalized sections of the society by providing benefits to the targeted groups through focused schemes and programmes both at central and state level.
- **Dial.Gov Service** is a common man's interface with the Government for information on welfare schemes which aims to bridge the existing gap between the benefit information and the beneficiary. It provides information to citizens about various welfare schemes and services provided by the Central and State Government, thus empowering the interested citizen to reach the welfare benefits based on his/ her eligibility through intelligent search. The information about benefits will be available to the citizen through different mediums like Dial. Gov web portal , mobile application, an interactive voice response service and call centre helpdesk.
- **The project is being developed** and implemented by National Informatics Center (NIC). NIC was established in 1976, and has since emerged as a "prime builder" of e-Government / e-Governance applications up to the grassroots level as well as a promoter of digital opportunities for sustainable development. NIC, through its ICT Network, "NICNET", has institutional linkages with all the Ministries /Departments of the Central Government, 35 State Governments/ Union Territories, and about 640 District administrations of India. NIC has been instrumental in steering e-Government/e-Governance applications in government ministries/departments at the Centre, States, Districts and Blocks, facilitating improvement in government services, wider transparency, promoting decentralized planning and management, resulting in better efficiency and accountability to the people of India.
- **It is being promoted** by Department of Electronic and Information Technology (DeitY), Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MoCIT). DeitY facilitate and promote e-governance, promotion of Electronics & Information Technology- Information Technology Enabled Services (IT-ITeS) Industry, providing support for creation of Innovation / Research & Development (R&D), building Knowledge network and securing India's cyber space.

Year End Review 2018 - Department of Sports (Ministry Of Youth Affairs & Sports)

- **The year 2018** has turned out to be the landmark for India in terms of achievements in Sports arena. Government's two pronged approach to sports – nurture topsports talent and find untapped sports stars at the grassroots, has yielded positive outcome. India recorded its best ever performance this year in the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games with 66 Medals, Jakarta Asian Games with 69 Medals and Para Asian Games with 72 Medals. The achievements of Department of Sports during the year 2018 are as under:-
- **Khelo India School Games (KISG), 2018:** 1st Khelo India School Games, 2018 were held between 31st January to 8th February, 2018 3507 Players from 29 States and 7 Union Territories participated. Medal Tally- 199 Gold + 199 Silver +275 Bronze medals
- **Biggest State contingents:** Maharashtra- 331 players Haryana – 388 players Delhi – 359 players Support staff at KISG : 875 Coaches, 578 Managers
- **Technical conduct by 578 nationally and internationally certified Technical Officials.** Accommodation provided in various Hotels through M/s. Thomas Cook International: 868 number of Volunteers participated Approximately 550 Talents is to be identified during the Talent Identification process.
- **Overall championship Results:** Haryana – 38 Gold, 26 Silver 38 Bronze: Total: 102 Medals Maharashtra - 38 Gold, 26 Silver 38 Bronze: Total: 111 Medals c. Delhi - 38 Gold, 26 Silver 38 Bronze: Total: 94 Medals

Major Achievements in Khelo India School Games, 2018:

- **1178 sports talents** have been identified & they will be imparted training for next 8 years with annual expenditure on each athlete of Rs. 5 lakh.

- **In Swimming**, Srihari Natraj from Karnataka won 6 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal. He broke Senior National 100 Mtr Backstroke record in KISG 2018. His previous time was 57.20 seconds and he gave 56.90 in KISG. He qualified for Asian age group and Youth Olympic Games.
- **In Shooting**, Manu Bhaker from Haryana with the score of 387 achieved the new National record Air Pistol Women Qualification round. In the finals also, Manu Bhaker with the score of 241.1 broke her own National record, achieved in Kerala, 2017. She is also quota winner of Youth Olympic Games, 2018.
- **In Athletics**, Abhishek Singh of U.P won the Gold in Shotput with a throw of 18.73 m and was declared the best Boy athlete. In 100 m hurdles, Aparna Roy of Kerala secured the Gold medal with a timing of 14.02 sec and was declared the best Girl athlete.
- **3. Republic Day Parade** Tableau of the Ministry adjudged best among all Ministries:
- **Tableau of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** for Republic Day 2018 was adjudged the best Tableau among all the Tableaux of the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India. In a ceremony in New Delhi on 28th January, Secretary (Sports) received the Trophy and Certificate for best Tableau from Hon'ble Raksha Mantri. Theme of the Tableau of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports was Khelo India.

Contribution of Rs. 10 crores to National Sports Development Fund (NSDF):

- **India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL)** made contribution of Rs.10.00 Crore to the NSDF. This was the third installment of contribution made by the IIFCL making the total contribution Rs 30.00 Crore. The IIFCL contribution is being utilized for promotion of sports in the disciplines Badminton, Archery and Para Sports by way of support to sportspersons in these disciplines for their customized training and other services and setting up of Academies/Support to Academies in these disciplines.
- **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)** was established with the objective of promotion of excellence in sports through support to top level sportspersons who are medal prospects in Olympics and other major international competitions and creation of sports infrastructure in priority disciplines etc. The Fund accepts contributions from private/public corporate sectors, other legal bodies like Trusts/Societies, individuals etc.
- **Performance in Commonwealth Games, 2018:** India competed at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast, Australia from 4 to 15 April 2018. It was India's 18th appearance at the Commonwealth Games. With 26 Gold medals and a total of 66 medals (26 Gold, 20 Silver and 20 Bronze), India finished 3rd for the tournament. It was India's best position since the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Gradation of LNIPE as Category-I Deemed to be University by UGC:

- **University Grants Commission** has recently graded the Lakshmbai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior in the highest category i.e. Category-I Deemed to be University as per the provisions of the UGC [Categorization of Universities (Only) for Grant of Graded Autonomy] Regulations, 2018 vide its letter dated 19.06.2018. Prior to it, this Institute has been accredited as A++ by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and awarded with the "Excellent Institute of Physical Education in India" during 11th National Education Summit 2017 and 2nd National Higher Education Summit for Skill Development held at VigyanBhawan, New Delhi.
- **Revised Guidelines for MaulanaAbulKalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy:** With a view to rationalize and simplify the selection of top performing university in sports for award of MaulanaAbulKalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy, the Union Sports Minister approved the revised guidelines for MAKA Trophy on 8.6.2018. Under the revised guidelines, the applications from the universities, which were hitherto used to be invited and scrutinized by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), will be invited by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports/Sports Authority of India. Scrutiny of applications will also be done by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports/Sports Authority of India. Criteria for calculation of marks for selection of universities for MAKA Trophy has been revised. Tournaments which are held more than once a year will not be considered for computation of marks. The amount of award money for the overall all winner university has been enhanced from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 15 lakh and for 1st Runner-up and 2nd Runner-up universities, the amount of award money has been enhanced from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 7.5 lakh and Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 4.5 lakh respectively.

Revision of Pension to Meritorious Sportspersons:

- **In a major step for the welfare of Sportspersons**, the Union Sports Minister approved the upward revision of pension to meritorious Sportspersons on 7.6.2018. Under the revision, the rate of pension has been doubled of the existing rate of pension on winning medals in international sports events.
- **The new rates of pension range** from minimum of Rs. 12,000/- to maximum of Rs. 20,000/- per month. The rate of pension of medal winners in the Para-Olympics Games and Para Asian Games will be at par with the medal winners in the Olympic Games and Asian Games respectively. The revision in rate of pension will be effective from 1st April 2018.

Scholarship programme under Khelo India:

- **Following the successful conduct** of the Khelo India School Games, the Department of Sports took another significant step towards the development of sports on 22.7.2018 and cleared 1178 players for a scholarship programme under Khelo India Talent Identification Development scheme.
- **The scholarship programme** is designed to take care of their expenses including training, development, boarding and lodging and tournament exposure apart from offering them out of pocket expense allowance.
- **Under this programme**, an annual stipend of Rs. 1.2 lakhs will be given to the players on a quarterly to meet their out of pocket expenses, treating injuries and even smaller but very important elements like local travel for themselves and their parents/ family members.

National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA):

- **the beginning of the year**, NADA put its efforts during the 1st Khelo India School Games, Delhi so that the integrity of sports be maintained and the participating sportspersons may become aware of International Standards for sports integrity and a total 377 dope tests were conducted by NADA to make the school games dope free.
- **In the run up to the Commonwealth Games** and Asian Games held in mid 2018, NADA tested as many as 498 Indian Athletes prior to Asian Games, which was the largest testing conducted by NADA before any international games. Out of these, 54 Indian athletes who were training abroad in preparation for the Asian Games, were got tested by NADA in various countries including Czech Republic, Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Thailand and Bhutan.
- **To monitor the Code Compliance** activities, World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) audit team audited anti doping program of NADA, India last year. Followed by Corrective Action Report recommended by audit team of WADA, NADA, India has implemented the corrective action in various areas and maintains its Code Compliance.
- **As per the annual statistics report** published by World Anti Doping Agency (WADA), the number of anti doping rule violation in India has come down. Such decrease in the number of doping incidence brought India from 3rd to 6th place globally.

National Sports University, Manipur:

- **The National Sports University Bill, 2018**, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 10.08.2017, for establishing a National Sports University in Manipur as part of a vision to enhance country's standing in sports, was passed by both Houses of Parliament during the Monsoon Session, 2018. After receiving the assent of the President, the National Sports University Act, 2018 was published in the Gazette of India on the 17th August, 2018.
- **National Sports University in Manipur** will be first of its kind to promote sports education in the areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management and sports coaching besides functioning as the national training centre for select sports disciplines by adopting best international practices.
- **The University will impart Bachelor's**, Master's and Doctoral programmes in Sports Coaching, Sports Sciences and physical Education in various disciplines. Specialised degree programmes in various sports education and coaching disciplines are envisaged in the future.
- **Hon'ble Prime Minister** laid the foundation stone of the National Sports University in Imphal on 16.3.2018.

- **National Sports University** has started functioning from a temporary campus in KhumanLampak Sports Complex, Imphal. First academic session started with Bachelor of Physical Education and Sports (BPES) and B.Sc. (Sports Coaching) Courses with effect from 15.01.2018.
- **Admission to academic session** 2018-19 have also been completed. Apart from BPES and B.Sc. (Sports Coaching), one new post graduate courses viz., MA (Sports Psychology) has been introduced.

National Sports & Adventure Awards 2018

- **President of India Shri Ram NathKovind** on 25th September, 2018 conferred National Sports & Adventure Awards 2018 in a ceremony held at RashtrapatiBhawan.
- **In National Sports Awards category**, the most prestigious Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna was conferred to S. MirabaiChanu (Weightlifting) and ViratKohli (Cricket) while Dronacharya Award, Arjuna Award and Dhyan Chand Award were conferred to 32 sportspersons/coaches in various disciplines.
- **Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award** was conferred to 10 persons in categories of Land Adventure, Water Adventure and one (1) award to Life Time Achievement category. MaulanaAbulKalam Azad Trophy was conferred to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.
- **Rashtriya Khel ProtsahanPuruskar** was conferred to three (3) entities namely Rashtriyaspat Nigam Limited in Identification and Nurturing of Budding & Young Talent category, JSW Steel in Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility and Isha Foundation in category of Sports for Development.

Financial support to Indian Kho Kho team for participation in International Championship:

- **Union Sports Minister** approved the participation of Kho Kho team from India at the First International Kho Kho Championship in England from 1st to 4th September, 2018, with financial support from the Government of India.
- **The approval** was given for the first time in relaxation of extant guidelines of the Ministry which, inter-alia, lay down that sports disciplines like Kho Kho, which are categorised as "Others", will not be eligible for financial support for participation in International sporting events.

Commendable performance by Indian Sportspersons in Asian Games, 2018, and Para Asian Games, 2018:

- **Indian sportspersons** and teams put a very commendable performance in Asian Games 2018 held at Jakarta and Palembang (Indonesia) from 18th August to 2nd September, 2018. India won 69 medals (15 Gold, 24 Silver and 30 Bronze) and was placed at 8th position in medals tally.
- **Hon'ble Prime Minister** felicitated the medal winners of Asian Games 2018 on 5th September, 2018.
- **In a separate function** organized by the Ministry to felicitate medal winners of Asian Games 2018 on 4th September, 2018, the medal winning sportspersons were also given cash awards. The gold medal winners were given Rs. 30 lakh Silver medalistsRs. 20 lakh and bronze medalistsRs. 10 lakh.
- **India finished overall** 9th in the medals tally with 72 medals (15 Gold, 24 Silver and 33 Bronze medals) the highest ever by India at an Asian Para Game (APG), outdoing the previous best by a huge margin.

Youth Olympic Games:

- **India finished overall** 14th in the medals tally with 13 medals (3 Gold, 9 Silver and 1 Bronze medals) the highest ever by India at Youth Olympic Game (YOG), in Buenos Aires, Argentina, outdoing the previous best.

Financial Assistance to Sportspersons:

- **The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** is operating PanditDeendayalUpadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons (PDUNWFS) with a view to assisting outstanding sportspersons of the past, living in indigent circumstances, who had brought glory to the country in sports.
- **During the 2018-19, the lump sum financial assistance from PDUNWFS was given to the following** : - Rs. 6 lakh to Shri N. Brij Kishore, Gymnast Coach for Medical Treatment Rs. 5 lakh to family of Shri SumitRabha, former football player for medical treatment. Rs. 5 lakh to Ms. KhaidemKalambiaChanu (Fencing) for medical treatment. Rs. 2 lakh to Shri Lakshmi Kanta Das, for medical treatment Rs. 5 lakh to Shri Limba Ram (Archery) for medical treatment Rs. 5 lakh to MsGohelaBoro, Archer for Medical Treatment. Rs. 5 lakh to Shri Ashok Soren, Archer for Medical Treatment. Rs. 5 lakh to Ms. Garima Joshi, Athlete, for Medical Treatment. Rs. 5 lakh to Shri Prem Lal, former Wrestler for Medical Treatment. Rs. 10 lakh to Shri Hakam Singh, former athlete for Medical Treatment. Rs. 2 lakh to MsVandanaSuryavanshi, former Judo player for ameliorating financial condition. Rs. 10 lakh to Shri G. Lakshaman, Athlete, for ameliorating financial condition

2018 AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships:

- **The 2018 AIBA Women's** World Boxing Championships was held at KD Jadav Indoor Stadium at New Delhi, India during November 15-24, 2018.
- **In the finals** of the light flyweight category Mary Kom of India beat Ukrainian boxer Hana Okhota to win the gold, creating history by becoming the first woman boxer to win six gold medals in the AIBA World Boxing Championships.
- **India** stood 3rd in the medal tally with one gold, one silver and two bronze.

Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management in Sports:

- **In order to strengthen** the overall sports ecosystem in the country and to develop expertise in various sectors, this Ministry has funded and guided Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Rohtak to commence a 2-year course.
- **This Post-Graduate Diploma** in Business Management in Sports from academic year 2018-19 at par with other Business Management courses of the Institute has already started.

Support to Universities and Medical Colleges under NCSSR scheme

- **A scheme of National Centre** of Sports Sciences and Research (NCSSR) which aims to support high level research, education and innovation with respect to high performance of elite athletes has been started. The scheme has two components:

- **One is setting up of NCSSR at NIS**, Patiala, and other is focused on creation of support to Sports Sciences Department in select Universities and Sports Medicine Departments in select Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals. MYAS would fund Rs.25 crore to selected Universities and Rs.12.5 crore to selected Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals over a period of 5 years and later they would become self-reliant.
- **The Sports Medicine Departments** of the Medical Colleges will offer post MBBS degree i.e. MD in Sports Medicine and Diploma in Sports Medicine. The Sports Science Department of the universities will offer degrees such as M. Sc. in Sports Physiology, Sports Biochemistry, Sports Nutrition, Sports Biomechanics, Sports Training Methods; MPT in Sports; M.A in Sports Psychology; and Certificate Course in Sports Anthropometry.
- **In connection** with second component of the scheme, following 6 Universities and 6 Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals have been selected in different parts of the country for setting up Departments of Sports Science and Sports Medicine therein respectively.
- **List of Universities/Institutions** selected for funding to support Sports Sciences department: (i) Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (ii) Lakshmi Bai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior (iii) National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad (iv) Annamalai University, Tamilnadu (v) Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer, Rajasthan and (vi) University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal. List of Universities/Hospitals/Medical Colleges selected for funding to support Sports Medicine department: (i) King George Medical university, Lucknow (ii) VardhmanMahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi (iii) Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma University of Health Sciences, Rohtak, Haryana (iv) Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Bengaluru, Karnataka (v) KEM Hospital and Seth G S Medical College, Mumbai and (vi) Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal.
- **Scheme of Special (Cash) Awards** to Medal Winners in International Sports Events and their Coaches: Rs. 11.02 cr. has been given to winning sportspersons under this scheme during 2018-19 so far.

National Medical Devices Promotion Council

- **The announcement** was made on the occasion of 4th WHO Global Forum on Medical Devices at Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone in Vishakhapatnam.
- **National Medical Devices Promotion Council:** The Council will be headed by Secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).
- **Apert** from the concerned departments of Government, it will also have representatives from health care industry and quality control institutions. The Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone of Visakhapatnam, will provide technical support to the Council.
- **The Prime objectives of the National Medical Devices Promotion Council are:** Act as a facilitating, promotional & developmental body for the Indian Medical Devices Industry (MDI). Render technical assistance to the agencies and departments concerned to simplify the approval processes for MDI promotion and development.
- **Enable entry** of emerging interventions and support certifications for manufacturers to reach levels of global trade norms and lead India to an export driven market in the sector. Support dissemination and documentation of international norms and standards for medical devices by capturing the best practices in the global market. Facilitate domestic manufacturers to rise to international level of understanding of regulatory and non regulatory needs of the industry.
- **Drive a robust** and dynamic Preferential Market Access (PMA) policy by identifying the strengths of the Indian manufacturers and discouraging unfair trade practices in imports Ensure pro-active monitoring of public procurement notices across India to ensure compliance with PMA guidelines of DIPP and DoP.
- **Undertake** validation of Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) and other such entities within MDI sector, which add value to the industry strength in manufacturing to gain foothold for new entrants. Make recommendations to government based on industry feedback and global practices on policy and process interventions to strengthen the medical technology sector.
- **Significance:** The Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is crucial to achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country. The manufacturing and trade in MDI is growing steadily in double digits. However, it is largely import-driven with imports accounting for over 65 percent of the domestic market.
- **The setting-up** of the Council will spur domestic manufacturing in this sector as Indian companies and startups have stated moving towards creating innovative products.

Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- **Significance:** With this, Jammu and Kashmir has become the first state in the country to have a law banning sexual exploitation of women by those in positions of authority, having a fiduciary relationship or a public servant.
- **Key features of the Bill:** The Bill seeks to amend the Ranbir Penal Code, whereby specific offence under section 354 E is being inserted to provide for the offence of 'Sextortion'. Amendments are being made in section 154, 161 and Schedule of Criminal Procedure Code and section 53 A of the Evidence Act so as to bring sextortion at par with similar offences prescribed under Ranbir Penal Code.
- **Amendment** is also being made in the Prevention of Corruption Act to amend the definition of misconduct and provide that demand for sexual favours would also constitute misconduct within the meaning of section 5.
- **What necessitated this?** The amendment came after an order was passed by Jammu and Kashmir High Court. The court had directed the state to examine the concept of 'Sextortion; in the context of applicable laws. "So that illegal acts, unwarranted demands for sexual favours and inappropriate contacts by the person in authority are made punishable."
- **About Ranbir Penal Code:** Indian Penal code is not applicable to Jammu and Kashmir and in place of IPC, a similar criminal law Ranbir Penal Code applies in the state. The code was introduced by Ranbir Singh during the Dogra Dynasty and it came in effect from 1932. The provision of code was prepared by Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Oxytocin

- **Observations made by the Court:** The government's decision was arbitrary and unreasonable. There was no scientific basis behind the Centre's decision restricting private companies from making or supplying the drug, which helps new mothers lactate, to prevent its alleged misuse in the dairy sector for increasing milk production.
- **Background:** As per the Centre's April 27 notification, the state-run Karnataka Antibiotics and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (KAPL) was solely allowed by the Centre to make the drug to meet the country's needs.
- **Why was it banned?** The drug is misused in the dairy industry where livestock is injected with Oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers. Oxytocin is also used to increase the size of vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, eggplants, gourds, and cucumbers.
- **About Oxytocin:** Oxytocin has also been dubbed the hug hormone, cuddle chemical, moral molecule, and the bliss hormone due to its effects on behaviour, including its role in love and in female reproductive biological functions in reproduction. Oxytocin is a hormone that is made in the brain, in the hypothalamus.
- **It is transported to,** and secreted by, the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of the brain. It acts both as a hormone and as a brain neurotransmitter. The release of oxytocin by the pituitary gland acts to regulate two female reproductive functions: Childbirth and Breast-feeding.
- **Way ahead:** Carbetocin: The World Health Organization (WHO) has come up with a safe and effective alternative to the controversial drug oxytocin.
- **While Oxytocin,** must be stored and transported at 2–8 degrees Celsius, and becomes less effective when exposed to heat, Carbetocin does not require refrigeration and retains its efficacy for at least three years even if it is stored at 30 degrees Celsius, and in 75% relative humidity.

Farm loan waiver

- **Why?** According to Rajan, loan waivers not only inhibit investment in the farm sector but put pressure on the fiscal of states which undertake farm loan waiver. In every state election during the last five years, loan waiver promise made by one political party or other. The recently concluded assembly election in five states, agriculture loan waiver and increasing minimum support price (MSP) of cereals was again part of manifesto of some of the political parties.
- **Also, loan waivers,** as the RBI has repeatedly argued, vitiate the credit culture, and stress the budgets of the waiving state or central government.
- **Background:** According to a 2017 report by the RBI, farm loan waiver amounting to Rs 88,000 crore likely to be released in 2017-18 by seven states, including Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, may push inflation on permanent basis by 0.2%.
- **The ever- rising demand:** Agriculture currently contributes just about 15% to the national output and about 50% of the population directly or indirectly depends on it for employment.

- **Farmer distress** is a real and pressing problem, as evidenced by the protests currently taking place in various parts of the country. In the recent past, widespread demands have been heard for farm loan waivers amid continuing agrarian distress.
- **Drawbacks of loan waivers:** Firstly, it covers only a tiny fraction of farmers. The loan waiver as a concept excludes most of the farm households in dire need of relief and includes some who do not deserve such relief on economic grounds.
- **Second**, it provides only a partial relief to the indebted farmers as about half of the institutional borrowing of a cultivator is for non-farm purposes. Third, in many cases, one household has multiple loans either from different sources or in the name of different family members, which entitles it to multiple loan waiving.
- **Fourth**, loan waiving excludes agricultural labourers who are even weaker than cultivators in bearing the consequences of economic distress. Fifth, it severely erodes the credit culture, with dire long-run consequences to the banking business.
- **Sixth**, the scheme is prone to serious exclusion and inclusion errors, as evidenced by the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) findings in the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008. Lastly, schemes have serious implications for other developmental expenditure, having a much larger multiplier effect on the economy.
- **What needs to be done?** Proper identification: For providing immediate relief to the needy farmers, a more inclusive alternative approach is to identify the vulnerable farmers based on certain criteria and give an equal amount as financial relief to the vulnerable and distressed families.
- **Enhance non-farm income:** The sustainable solution to indebtedness and agrarian distress is to raise income from agricultural activities and enhance access to non-farm sources of income. The low scale of farms necessitates that some cultivators move from agriculture to non-farm jobs.
- **Improved technology**, expansion of irrigation coverage, and crop diversification towards high-value crops are appropriate measures for raising productivity and farmers' income. All these require more public funding and support.
- **Way ahead:** The magic wand of a waiver can offer temporary relief, but long-term solutions are needed to solve farmer woes. There are many dimensions of the present agrarian crisis in India. The search for a solution therefore needs to be comprehensive by taking into consideration all the factors that contribute to the crisis. Furthermore, both short- and long-term measures are required to address the numerous problems associated with the agrarian crisis.

GSAT-7A

- **GSLV-F11:** The GSLV-F11 is ISRO's fourth generation launch vehicle with three stages. The launch vehicle, which is in its 13th flight, will inject GSAT-7A into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- **About GSAT-7A:** GSAT-7A would be placed in the geostationary orbit and this communication satellite is expected to help the IAF to interlink different ground radar stations, airbases and AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control System) aircraft. The idea is to improve the IAF's network-centric warfare capabilities.
- **The GSAT-7A** is expected to have the Ku-band transponders and two deployable solar arrays onboard.
- **The GSAT-7A** is also expected to be a big push for drone operations as it will help the Navy reduce the reliance on on-ground control stations and take satellite-control of military unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) which should help boost the range and endurance of the UAVs.
- **In addition** to GSAT-7A, the IAF would also be getting the GSAT-7C in a few years, to boost the network-centric operations.
- **Background- GSAT 7 series:** The GSAT 7 series was launched in 2013 as a dedicated communications satellite for the Indian Navy, which made the Navy completely independent of relying on foreign satellites for its blue water capabilities, thanks to GSAT 7 having a 2,000 nautical mile footprint. This helps in providing real-time inputs to Indian warships, submarines and maritime aircraft.

ECO Niwas Samhita 2018

- **Ministry of Power** has launched the ECO Niwas Samhita 2018, an Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings (ECBC-R). The code was launched on National Energy Conservation Day 2018.

- **Aim of ECO Niwas Samhita 2018:** To benefit the occupants and the environment by promoting energy efficiency in design and construction of homes, apartments and townships.
- **About the Energy Conservation Building Code:** It is prepared after extensive consultations with all stakeholders, consisting of architects & experts including building material suppliers and developers. The parameters listed have been developed based on large number of parameters using climate and energy related data.
- **The code** is expected to assist large number of architects and builders who are involved in design and construction of new residential complexes. It has potential for energy savings to the tune of 125 Billion Units of electricity per year by 2030, equivalent to about 100 million ton of Co2 emission.

National Energy Conservation Awards:

- **Ministry of Power** in association with Bureau of Energy Efficiency celebrates the National Energy Conservation Day on every 14th December.
- **On this day**, 26 industrial units from various sectors were given awards for their excellent performance in energy efficiency.
- **About Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE):** A statutory body under Ministry of Power created in March 2002 under the provisions of the nation's 2001 Energy Conservation Act. To implement policy and programmes in energy efficiency and conservation.
- **Objective of BEE** – To reduce energy intensity in our country by optimizing energy demand and To reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), responsible for global warming and climate change.
- **India** has committed to reduction of 33-35% GHG emission by 2030 as part of the document submitted to UNFCCC.

India Post ventures into new arena of e-market place.

- **The Ministry of State for Communications** (Independent Charge), launched the e-Commerce Portal of the Department of Posts (DoP).
- **It will** provide an e-Market place to sellers especially to rural artisans/self-help groups/ women entrepreneurs/State and Central PSUs/Autonomous Bodies etc. to sell their products to buyers across the Country.
- **Major Highlights:** The small and local sellers (who were left) will now, by leveraging the vast physical and IT network of DoP, be able to maximize their reach and retailing power. The buyers can access the products of their choice displayed by sellers on the portal and place online orders by making digital payments.
- **Post Office Savings Bank (POSB):** Under Core Banking Solution (CBS), an internet banking facility for Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) customers has been launched. Now, nearly 17 Crore POSB accounts will be intra-operable and customers can also transfer funds online to RD and PPF accounts of Post Offices. It helps to do transactions without physically visiting post offices.
- **Deen Dayal SPARSH:** The Department of Posts had launched a scholarship program for school children called Deen Dayal SPARSH (i.e., Scholarship for Promotion of Aptitude & Research in Stamps as a Hobby).
- **Objective of Deen Dayal SPARSH** – To bring philately to the mainstream of the education system and incentivizing it, in 2017.
- **Meghdoot Award:** Shri Sinha (Minister of State for Communications) presented the Meghdoot Awards to the Gramin Dak Sewak (GDS) and employees of the Department in eight categories in recognition of their outstanding contribution.

Socially Oriented Insurance Schemes

- **The socially oriented insurance** schemes are currently being operated or partially sponsored by the Central Government targeted at vulnerable sections of the society.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY):** Launched on 9th May, 2015. These schemes are offered/administered through both public and private sector insurance companies, in tie up with scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks.
- **PMJJBY:** It offers a renewable one-year term life cover of Rupees Two Lakh to all account holders in the age group of 18 to 50 years, covering death due to any reason, for a premium of Rs. 330/- per annum per subscriber, to be auto debited from subscriber's bank account.
- **PMSBY:** It offers a renewable one-year accidental death cum disability cover to all subscribing bank account holders in the age group of 18 to 70 years for a premium of Rs. 12/- per annum per subscriber to be auto debited from subscriber's bank account. It provides a cover of Rs. Two Lakh for accidental death or total permanent disability and Rs One Lakh in case of permanent partial disability. The above schemes are on self-subscription basis and involves no Government contribution.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):

- **Ministry of Agriculture** implements PMFBY and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS). It provides comprehensive crop insurance cover against non-preventable natural risks at an affordable rate to farmers.
- **It is compulsory** for loanee farmers availing crop loans for notified crops in notified areas and voluntary for non-loanee farmers.
- **Uniform maximum premium** of only 2%, 1.5% and 5% of the sum insured to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops, Rabi crops and commercial/horticultural crops.
- **The difference** between premium and the rate of insurance charges payable by farmers is provided as subsidy and shared equally by the Centre and State.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) – Ayushman Bharat:

- **A centrally sponsored scheme.** An entitlement-based scheme. It covers poor and vulnerable families based on deprivation and occupational criteria as per SECC data.
- **It provides** health coverage up to Rs. 5 lakh per family, per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization to over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable families.
- **It provides** cashless and paperless services for the beneficiary at the point of service in any (public and private) empaneled hospitals across India.
- **The ratio of premium** under PMJAY is 60:40 between Centre and State except North Eastern States and 3 Himalayan States where the ratio is 90:10 with an upper limit for Centre.
- **In the case of Union Territories,** the Central contribution of premium is 100% for UTs without legislature, while it is 60:40 for those with legislature.

Jnanpith Award:

- **Context:** Renowned English fiction writer Amitav Ghosh has been selected for Jnanpith award, 2018.

- **About:** The Jnanpith Award is one of the prestigious literary honours in the country. The award was instituted in 1961. Eligibility: Any Indian citizen who writes in any of the official languages of India is eligible for the honour.

Kochi-Muziris Biennale:

- **Context:** Fourth edition of Kochi-Muziris biennale is being held in Fort Kochi, Kerala. The Biennale was curated by Anita Dube and become the first Biennale in world in which participation of women accounts for half of the participating artists.
- **Theme of the Biennale is – “Possibilities for a Non- Alienated Life”.** The Kochi-Muziris Biennale is an international exhibition of contemporary art held in Kochi, Kerala. It is the largest art exhibition in India and the biggest contemporary art festival in Asia. The Kochi-Muziris Biennale is an initiative of the Kochi Biennale Foundation with support from the Government of Kerala.



IMPRESS scheme has been launched to promote Social Science Research in the country

- **The Government has approved** "Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education by 2022", as per which the scope of institutions to be funded through Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has been enlarged to encompass School Education and Medical Education institutions, apart from Higher Education. The total authorized equity capital of HEFA has been raised to Rs.10,000 crore, with the facility to leverage additional resources from the market, based on requirement.
- **A total Government equity** of Rs. 6,000 Crore, has been approved. All funds for educational infrastructure in centrally funded educational institutions will henceforth be in the form of ten year loans through HEFA to the institution, the interest liability of which would be borne by the Government. The principal repayment would be undertaken by the institutions in part or full depending on their age profile and financial capability. For new institutions and those which have limited internal fund generating capacity, the entire principal and interest repayment would be undertaken by the Government. There is an additional window of financing for school and medical education institutions where the sponsoring Department would undertake to repay the principal and interest to HEFA. So far, HEFA has approved projects of Rs. 24430 Crore with total loan amount of Rs. 12307 Crore.
- **The Government of India, in August 2018**, had sanctioned the scheme "Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)" at a total cost of Rs. 414 Cr for implementation up to 31.03.2021. Under the Scheme, 1500 research projects will be awarded for 2 years to support the social science research in the higher educational institutions and to enable research to guide policy making.
- **The Indian Council of Social Science** and Research (ICSSR) will be the project implementing agency.
- **The broad objectives of the scheme are:** To identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society.
- **To focus research on** (11) broad thematic areas such as : State and Democracy, Urban transformation, Media, Culture and Society, Employment, Skills and Rural transformation , Governance, Innovation and Public Policy, Growth, Macro-trade and Economic Policy, Agriculture and Rural Development, Health and Environment, Science and Education, Social Media and Technology, Politics, Law and Economics. The sub- theme areas will be decided on the basis of Expert Groups' advice before notifying the scheme and calling for applications.
- **To ensure selection** of projects through a transparent, competitive process on online mode.
- **To provide opportunity** for social science researchers in any institution in the country, including all Universities (Central and State), private institutions with 12(B) status conferred by UGC.
- **ICSSR funded/ recognized** research institutes will also be eligible to submit research proposals on the given themes and sub-themes.

Scholarship Schemes for North-East Students

- **Ishan Vikas and Ishan Uday** schemes are being implemented for the students of North Eastern region.
- **Ishan Vikas is coordinated** by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati and under the programme, selected school children from North Eastern States are brought in close contact with the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) and National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) during the vacation period to motivate them to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics and to facilitate internship opportunities for the engineering college students in various institutes of national importance. Annual target is to provide visit of 96 school children to premier institutes and summer internships to 250 engineering students. Rs. 605.45 lakhs has been approved for the programme. Since inception of the programme in 2014-15, 1637 (922 boys and 715 girls) school children and 378 (266 boys and 112 girls) Engineering students have benefitted.
- **Ishan Uday Scholarship Scheme** is administered by University Grants Commission (UGC). Under the scheme, scholarship is provided to the students having parental income upto Rs. 4.5 lakh per annum, from the North East Region for pursuing general degree, technical and professional degree courses including medical and para-medical courses. The target of beneficiaries under the scheme is 10,000 per year. Rate of scholarship under the scheme is, Rs. 5400/- per month for general degree course and Rs. 7800/- per month for technical/medical/professional/paramedical courses. Since inception of the scheme in 2014-15 and till September, 2018, Rs. 309.95 Crore has been disbursed to 68,207 students, towards fresh and renewal scholarships.

Initiatives of Indian Railways to improve Standards and Cleanliness of Toilets in Trains and Railway Stations

- **Some of the major initiatives** taken by Indian Railways towards improvement in standards and cleanliness of toilets in trains and at Railway stations are as follows:
- **To avoid dropping** of night soils on platform lines and on track, pace of installation of Bio-toilets in Coaches has been intensified under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. It is planned to install bio-toilets in the entire BG coaching fleet of Indian Railways by 2019.
- **Provision of dustbins** is being done in non AC coaches also in addition to the AC Coaches. Provision of health faucets in all new AC and non-AC coaches, in addition to mug with chain arrangement. Upgradation of coach toilets in identified rakes.
- **Cleaning of coaches** including toilets at both ends including mechanised cleaning through professional agencies at around 145 coaching depots. On Board Housekeeping Service (OBHS) has been provided in more than 1050 pairs of trains including Rajdhani, Shatabdi and other important long distance Mail/Express trains for cleaning of coach toilets, doorways, aisles and passenger compartments during the run of the trains.
- **'Coach Mitra' facility** has been introduced in about 1000 pairs of OBHS trains. 'Coach Mitra' is a single window interface to register coach related requirements of passengers such as cleaning, disinfection, linen, train lighting, air conditioning and watering of coaches.
- **Separate toilets for men** and women are available as per norms at all erstwhile 'A1', 'A', 'B' and 'D' category railway stations. However, upgradation of amenities at stations including toilets is a continuous and on-going process and 2894 toilets were constructed / improved in the past four years, and further, construction / improvement works in this regard are being undertaken depending upon need, volume of the passenger traffic and priority subject to availability of funds.
- **Operation of public toilets**, both deluxe and normal, with ladies and gents units, is also being done through Public Private Partnership (PPP) model on 'Pay and Use' basis. Zonal Railways have been authorized regarding operation and maintenance, including cleanliness of these 'Pay and Use' toilets through contracts. More than 900 stations have Normal Pay and Use toilets and about 60 stations have Deluxe Pay and Use toilets.
- **Provision of Integrated Mechanised cleaning** contracts with improved processes and machinery at major stations including toilets has been intensified. Currently, mechanised cleaning is done at nearly 520 stations.
- **Special Cleanliness Campaign under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** was launched on Indian Railways on 2nd October, 2014. Regular intensive campaigns / awareness drives have been organised since then over the Indian Railways with the sole objective to achieve significant and sustainable improvements in cleanliness standards of railway stations and trains.
- **Regular inspections at various levels** are carried out and deficiencies are made good whenever noticed. Suitable action is taken against the contractors who are found wanting in the performance of their duties.

India's first military flight using blended Bio-Jet fuel Tested at Aste, bengaluru

- **On 17 December 2018**, Experimental Test Pilots and Test Engineer from IAF's premier testing establishment ASTE, flew India's first military flight using blended bio-jet fuel on the An-32 transport aircraft. The project is a combined effort of IAF, DRDO, Directorate General Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA) and CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum.
- **On 27 July 2018**, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, Chief of Air Staff had announced IAF's intention to promote biojet fuels. Addressing the CII-SIDM seminar on promoting indigenised technologies, the CAS had stated that IAF intended to fly the An-32 with 10% biojet fuel on 26 Jan 2019 Republic Day flypast.
- **Indian Air Force** carried out extensive engine tests on the ground. This is now followed by flight trials using 10% biojet blended ATF. This fuel is made from Jatropa oil sourced from Chattisgarh Biodiesel Development Authority (CBDA) and then processed at CSIR-IIP, Dehradun. IAF intends to fly the An-32 transport aircraft using biojet fuel on 26 January 2019, in the Republic Day flypast.

Year End Review- 2018: Ministry of Minority Affairs 1-Skill Development:

- **The Ministry of Minority Affairs** organised several "Hunar Haats" in the country including at Baba Khadak Singh Marg, New Delhi (from February 11, 2018) at Allahabad (Sept, 2018), Pragati Maidan (2016, 2017, 2018) at New Delhi; Puducherry (2017, 2018) and Mumbai (2017)..
- **The theme of "Hunar Haat"** organized by the Ministry of Minority Affairs was "Development with Dignity". "Hunar Haat" was organised from February, 10-18, 2018 in New Delhi "Hunar Haats", are being organised by the Minority Affairs Ministry to provide an opportunity, as well as domestic and international exposure to the master artisans from across the country.
- **"Hunar Haats"**, being organised across the country have become a "credible brand" to fulfil Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's commitment to "Make in India", "Stand up India" and "Start up India".
- **In the coming days, "Hunar Haat"** will be organised at Mumbai (December 2018), Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi (January 2019) and Goa (February 2019). More Than 1 lakh 50 thousand artisans and people associated with them have been provided employment and employment opportunities during about last one year through "Hunar Haat".

2-Education:

- **The Ministry of Minority Affairs** has implemented a scheme namely "Free Coaching and Allied Scheme for the candidates and students belonging to minority communities" all over the country including North Eastern States, under which, free coaching is provided to students belonging to six notified minority communities through selected or empanelled coaching institutions or organisations for preparation of qualifying examinations for admission in technical and professional courses and competitive examinations for recruitment to Group "A", "B" and "C" services and other equivalent posts under the Central and State governments including public sector undertakings, banks, insurance companies etc. The Ministry has organised "Taleem-o-Tarbiyat" programme at Anjuman-a-Islam Girls High School at Bandra, Mumbai.
- **The Ministry has launched** a pilot project for minority Cyber Gram for digital literacy in a minority dominated village Chandauli in Alwar district of Rajasthan. The Ministry mainstreamed the Cyber Gram project with the Multi-sectoral Development Programme in the year 2014-15 as a special initiative.
- **The Ministry implements various schemes** for pursuing higher research and institutions of National importance for minority students, though there is no specific skill scheme for minority youth to facilitate their entry into the areas of higher research and institutions of national importance.
- **The Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme** is awarded for pursuing professional and technical courses, at under-graduate and post-graduate levels, in institutions recognized by the appropriate authority. The details of schemes/guidelines and achievements are available on the website of this Ministry (www.minorityaffairs.gov.in).
- **The Ministry has launched a training programme** to link Madarsa teachers with the mainstream education system on 27 March, 2018.
- **The Ministry, in collaboration with** Jamia Millia Islamia University, has organised residential training programme for 40 Madarsa teachers and distributed certificates after completion of training
- **The Ministry, distributed certificates** to those students who have been successful in "Bridge Course", jointly conducted by Ministry of Minority Affairs and Jamia Millia Islamia, for school drop outs and those students who are pursuing their studies in Madarsas. Ministry of Minority Affairs, in collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia University, had started "Bridge Course" to bring Madarsa students and school drop outs into mainstream education system
- **The Ministry launched the country's first "National Scholarship Portal Mobile App"** (NSP Mobile App) in New Delhi on 13 September, 2018. The portal will ensure a smooth, accessible and hassle-free scholarship system for students from poor and weaker sections.
- **On 1st October, 2018, Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi** laid foundation stone of first world class educational institute being established with the assistance of Minority Affairs Ministry, Govt. of India, at Kohrapipali village of Alwar district in Rajasthan. the first world class educational institute in Alwar will be proved to be a milestone in the direction of affordable, accessible and quality education to poor, weaker sections including Minorities.
- **This educational institution** will start functioning in 2020. The Rajasthan Government has given 15 acres of land in Kohrapipali village for this educational institute. World class skill development centre, educational facilities for primary to higher studies, Ayurveda and Unani science and sports facilities will be established here. Forty per cent reservation is proposed for girls in this institution.

3- Haj:

- **Saudi Arabia has given the green signal** for India's decision to revive the option of sending Haj pilgrims through sea route also and officials from both the countries will discuss on all the necessary formalities and technicalities so that Haj pilgrimage through sea route can be started in the coming years. A decision in this regard was taken, during the signing of bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement between India and Saudi Arabia at Makkah. Sending pilgrims through ships will help cut down travel expenses significantly. The practice of ferrying Haj pilgrims between Mumbai and Jeddah by waterways was stopped from 1995.
- **This time Haj 2018** has been made 100 per cent digital/online. For the first time about 1300 Muslim women from India went to Haj without "Mehram" (male companion). Separate accommodation and transport was arranged for these women Haj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia. For the first time more than 100 female Haj Assistants were deployed in Saudi Arabia to assist women Haj pilgrims.
- **India's Haj Quota Increased** for the second consecutive year and for the first time after the Independence, record number of 1 lakh 75 thousand 25 Haj Pilgrims from India went for Haj 2018 that too without Haj subsidy. The Government, led by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has succeeded in getting India's Haj quota increased for the consecutive second year.
- **The amount of Haj subsidy** provided by the Government of India reflects in the budget of Ministry of Civil Aviation, which is the nodal Ministry responsible for making air travel arrangements for Haj pilgrims identified by the Haj Committee of India.
- **The welfare schemes meant** for minorities are implemented by Ministry of Minority Affairs from the budget allocated to the Ministry. An additional allocation of Rs.505 Crore has been made for the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the year 2018-19. It has been decided to allocate bulk of the additional funding for educational empowerment of Minority communities. For the first time after the Independence, a record number of Muslims from the country went to Haj this year and that too without any subsidy.
- **The Union Government's commitment** to transparency and strict directives given to the airlines to check unreasonable increase in fares has ensured that Haj 2018 air fares have been come down significantly this year.
- **Even after ending the Haj subsidy**, Rs 57 crore less were paid to airlines this year for those Haj pilgrims, who went through Haj Committee of India.
- **Union Minister for Minority Affairs** Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi flagged off the first batch of Haj pilgrims from New Delhi Airport in the morning of 14 July, 2018, with prayers of country's safety and prosperity.
- **It is for the first time after Independence** that preparation for next year's Haj has been started immediately after completion of the current year's Haj process in India.
- **Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Naqvi** has reviewed the Haj 2019 preparation meeting on 3rd October, 2018.

4-Waqf:

- **The Ministry of Minority Affairs** has decided to award those "Mutawallis" who will perform well in management of waqf properties to ensure utilisation of these properties for upliftment of the society especially educational empowerment of girls. Central Waqf Council is providing financial help to state waqf boards for digitisation of records so that state waqf boards can complete the task within timeframe.
- **The Central Government has launched** a scheme in 2009 namely „Computerization of Records of State Waqf Boards" with a view to streamline record keeping, introduce transparency, and to computerize and digitize the records of waqf properties of the State/UT Waqf Boards (SWBs). The scheme has now been modified and renamed as Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme (QWBTS). Under the "Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karykram" (PMJKV), the Minority Affairs Ministry will construct schools, colleges, ITIs, skill development centres, multi-purpose community centres "Sadbhav Mandap", "Hunar Hub", hospitals, business centres etc on waqf properties across the country. This will be for the first time after the Independence of the country.
- **As per provisions of section 32** of the Waqf Act 1995 as amended, general superintendence of all auqaf in a State is vested with the State Waqf Board (SWB) and the Waqf Board is empowered to manage the waqf property and take legal action against unauthorized occupation and encroachment of such properties. The Central Waqf Council (CWC) has decided to provide training to women for their empowerment in the trades of i) Tailoring & Knitting ii) Food Processing iii) Embroidery and iv) Cloth Printing and accordingly, proposals have been invited. The CWC has also decided to provide financial support for coaching of muslim students for competitive examinations for jobs through the coaching centers of Jamia Millia Islamia for 50 students for Civil Services and Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh for 100 students i.e. 50 for Civil Services and 50 for SSC-CGL/Bank PO examinations.
- **Ministry of Minority Affairs** has been implementing a scheme called "Nai – Roshni. The scheme is for Leadership Development of Minority Women with an aim to empower and instil confidence in women by providing knowledge, tools and techniques for interacting with Government systems, banks and intermediaries at all levels.

- **Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF)** is implementing Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship for girls belonging to minorities. Under this scheme scholarship is provided to girls students for classes 9th, 10th, 11th & 12th. The eligible girls may apply online. The details of this scheme is available on the website for MAEF i.e. www.maef.nic.in. The details of the various schemes of the Ministry are available on its website i.e. www.minorityaffairs.gov.in.

5- Dargah Ajmer:

- **Union Minister for Minority Affairs** Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi offered 'Chadar' on behalf of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at dargah of Sufi Saint Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer Sharif on 19 March, 2018.
- **In his message, Prime Minister** Shri Narendra Modi conveyed greetings and best wishes to followers of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in India and abroad on the occasion of 806th annual Urs. Prime Minister said, "On the occasion of the annual Urs of this great saint, I am offering "Chadar" and Khirraaj-E-Aqueedat (homage) to Dargah Ajmer Sharif and wish for a harmonious co-existence of our culture. Greetings and best wishes to the followers of Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti across the world on the annual Urs. "People from all sections of the society welcomed wholeheartedly the "Chadar" send by the Prime Minister. Shri Naqvi also inaugurated 100 toilets complex, constructed by Ministry of Minority Affairs at "Vishramsthali", Kayad near the Dargah. Zaireen, coming in large number at Dargah, will be benefitted from the facility. Shri Naqvi also took stock of various ongoing development works related to Ajmer Dargah with the officials.
- **Union Minister for Minority Affairs** Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has emphasised that the philosophy of Sufism spreads the thoughts of peace and harmony. While launching the official web portal of Dargah Khwaja Sahib Ajmer on 17 July, 2018 in New Delhi, Shri Naqvi said that the present government is doing efforts for inclusive growth of every section of the society. The web address can be accessed at <https://gharibnawaz.minorityaffairs.gov.in>

6- Pradhanmantri Jan Vikas Karykram (earlier Multi Sectoral Development):

- **"Pradhan mantri Jan Vikas Karykram"** (earlier Multi Sectoral Development Programme) has been proved to be a milestone in the direction of socio-economic-educational empowerment of Minorities and other weaker sections of the society. For the first time after the Independence, a campaign has been started on war-footing to provide basic amenities to ensure educational empowerment of Minorities especially girls in 308 districts across the country.
- **The Central Government**, keeping in mind the educational empowerment and employment oriented skill development of Minority girls, is providing school, college, polytechnic, girls hostel, ITI, skill development centre etc under "Pradhan mantri Jan Vikas karykram" in those "backward and ignored" areas which had been deprived of these facilities since the Independence.
- **During the last 4 years**, under PMJVK, 16 Degree Colleges, 1992 School Buildings, 37,123 Additional Classrooms, 1147 Hostels, 173 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), 48 Polytechnics, 38,753 Anganwadi Centres, 3,48,624 IAY (PMAY) houses, 323 Sadbhavna Mandaps, 73 Residential Schools, 494 Market sheds, 17,397 drinking water facilities etc have been constructed by the Central Government in the Minority concentrated areas. This has led to significant improvement in lives of weaker sections, Minorities especially women.

7- Secularism and Empowerment:

- **"Secularism, social-communal harmony and tolerance"** is in the DNA of India and compared to the entire world, constitutional, social, cultural and religious rights of minorities are more safe and secure in India. A campaign has been started by the government on war-footing to provide basic amenities to ensure educational empowerment of girls belonging to Minority communities in 308 districts across the country. The Central Government, keeping in mind the educational empowerment and employment oriented skill development of Minority girls, is providing school, college, polytechnic, girls hostel, ITI, skill development centre etc under "Pradhanmantri Jan Vikas Karykram" in those "backward and ignored" areas which had been deprived of these facilities since the Independence.
- **The steps taken by the Central Government** aimed at inclusive growth has ensured that today Minorities have been brought into mainstream development. Schemes such as "Seekho aur Kamao", "Ustaad", "Garib Nawaz Kaushal Vikas Yojana", "NaiManzil", "Nai Roshni", "Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls scholarships" etc have proved to be the guarantee of empowerment of Minorities especially girls. More than 6 lakh people from Minority communities have been provided employment and employment opportunities through these job-oriented skill development programmes.

- **The Ministry has stressed upon** fast and transparent implementation of schemes for the welfare of the Minorities. A workshop on "Financial Management" was organised by National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC) on 17 July, 2018 in New.
- **The schemes/ programmes implemented** by this Ministry for the minority communities notified under section 2(c) of the NCM Act 1992 viz Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis are :-
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)** [restructured Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)] - implemented in identified Minority Concentration Blocks, Minority Concentration Towns, Minority Concentration District Headquarters & Clusters of Villages for infrastructure development.

Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme

- **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme**, Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme and Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme – for educational empowerment. Maulana Azad National Fellowship – for research fellows' empowerment.
- **"Naya Savera" Free coaching and Allied Scheme** - to enhance skills and knowledge of students and candidates for employment through competitive examination and admission in technical and professional courses.
- **Padho Pardes – Scheme for interest subsidy** on educational loans for overseas studies in technical and professional courses.
- **Nai Udaan - Support for students** clearing Preliminary Examination conducted by UPSC, SSC, State Public Service Commissions, etc.
- **Jiyo Parsi** – Scheme for containing population decline of Parsis.
- **Nai Roshni** – Scheme for leadership development of minority women.
- **Seekho Aur Kamao** – Skill development initiative for minorities.
- **10. Nai Manzil** – Scheme for formal school education & skilling of school dropouts.
- **11. USTTAD** - Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development.
- **12. Hamari Dharohar** - Scheme to preserve rich heritage of minority Communities under the overall concept of Indian Culture.
- **13. Grants-in-Aid** to Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) for implementation of education and skill related schemes.
- **14. Garib Nawaz** Skill Development Centre Scheme.
- **15. Equity to National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC)** for providing loans at concessional interest rates to minorities for self-employment and income generating activities. Details of the schemes and the achievements in respect of the schemes are available on the website of this Ministry (www.minorityaffairs.gov.in, on the website of MAEF (www.maef.nic.in) and, on the website of NMDFC (www.nmdfc.org).

8- Swachchhata:

- **The Ministry** has stressed the need of cleanliness of our inner and outer self. At the SWACHHTA HI SEWA programme at Maulana Azad Educational Foundation in New Delhi on 15 September, 2018, the Minister of Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi participated in the SHRAMDAAN activities along with film star Annu Kapoor, singer Sabri Brothers and other dignitaries.

9- Mushaira:

- **The Ministry of Minority Affairs**, organised "Mushaira", on 6 October, 2018 based on the themes of teachings and principles of Mahatma Gandhi as a part of Central Government's decision to commemorate 150th Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation in New Delhi.
- **On 26th October, 2018**, A "Mushaira", to commemorate 150th Birth Anniversary of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, was organised in Mumbai. Maharashtra Governor Shri C. Vidyasagar Rao inaugurated this "Mushaira" in the presence of Union Minority Affairs Minister Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi.
- **This "Mushaira" was organised** at Rangsharda Auditorium, Bandra West, Mumbai. Famous Urdu poets like Shri Wasim Bareilvi, Shri Haseeb Soz, Shri Manzar Bhopali, Shri Mansoor Usmani (Nazim), poetess Dr. Naseem Nikhat, Shri Aizaz Popular Merathi, poetess Shabina Adeeb, poetess Nikhat Amrohvi, singer Salma Agha, Shri Shakeel Azmi, Shri Qaiser Khalid and Col. Dr V P Singh gave strong message of peace, humanity and unity through their poetry.
- **A large number of people** from political, social and other fields, intellectuals and youths were present and encouraged the performing poets. These Mushairas will also be organised in Lucknow, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Ranchi and other cities in Future.



Year End Review 2018: Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under M/O Social Justice & Empowerment

- **In order to give focused attention** to policy issue and meaningful thrust to the activities aimed at welfare and empowerment of the person with disabilities, a separate Department of Disability Affairs was carved out of the Ministry of Social justice & Empowerment on May 12, 2012. The Department was renamed as Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on 08-12-2014. The Department acts as a nodal agency for matters pertaining to disability and persons with disabilities including effecting closer coordination among different stakeholders; related Central Ministries, State/UT Governments, NGOs etc. in matters pertaining to disability.
- **The Department** is primarily entrusted with the task of empowerment of person with disabilities to build an inclusive society in which equal opportunities are provided for the growth and development of person with disabilities so that they can lead productive, safe and dignified live. To empower persons with disabilities through its various Acts/Institution/Organisations and Schemes for rehabilitation and to create an enabling environment that provides such persons with equal opportunities, protection of their rights and enables them to participates as independent and productive members of society.
- **To realize its vision and achieve the mission, the departments strives for the following bjectives:-** Undertaking following measures for rehabilitation: Physical rehabilitation, which includes early detection and intervention counseling and medical rehabilitation and assistance in procuring appropriate aids and appliances for reducing the effect of disabilities; Educational rehabilitation including vocational education and Economic rehabilitation and social empowerment.
- **Developing rehabilitation professionals/personnel.** Improving internal efficiency/responsiveness/service delivery. Advocating empowerment of person with disabilities through awareness generation among different sections of the society.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED PERSONS FOR PURCHASE/FITTING OF AIDS AND APPLIANCES (ADIP) SCHEMES.

- **1456 ADIP Camps** organized and more than 2.40 lakh Divyangjan provided Aids Assistive Devices in the year 2018. 3430 Motorized tricycles provided and 287 Cochlear implant surgery conducted successfully during this year.
- **A Mega Distribution Camp** was organized at Gwalior on 11.02.2018 at Jiwaji University Ground, Gwalior for distribution of Aids & Assistive devices to the Divyangjan and Senior Citizens through ALIMCO, a CPSE under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. In the camp Aids and Assistive devices were distributed to Divyangjan & senior citizens belonging to BPL category in the august presence of The Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ramnath Kovind.
- **Also, Smt. Anandiben Patel**, Hon'ble Governor, Madhya Pradesh, Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh, Shri Kaptan Singh Solanki, Hon'ble Governor, Haryana, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Hon'ble Minister, Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development Panchayati Raj and Mines, Govt. of India, Shri Nitish Kumar Chief Minister Bihar were present. In addition to above, Shri Narayan Singh Kushwaha, Minister of Madhya Pradesh Govt., Shri Gaurishankar Chaturbhuj Bisen, Minister of Madhya Pradesh Government, Shri Gopal Bhargava, Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice, Madhya Pradesh, Smt. Maya Singh, Minister, Madhya Pradesh Government, Shri Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya, Minister of Madhya Pradesh and other dignitaries of the State were also present.
- **At Gwalior mega camp 4271 nos.** of beneficiaries, 2436 nos. of Divyangjan under ADIP Scheme & 1835 Nos. of senior citizens under Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojana were provided 8108 nos. of equipment & Assistive Devices amounting to Rs 288.72 Lakhs, free of cost.
- **Major Aids and Assistive Devices** distributed under ADIP Scheme were Motorized Tricycles-119, Conventional Tricycles-762, Wheelchairs-277, Crutches-1236, Walking Sticks-327, Braille Canes-34, Braille Kits-36, Braille Slates-19, Hearing Aids-742, Rolator-38, Smart Cane-127, Smart Phone-50, ADL Kit-26, Cell Phone -26, Daisy Player-30, MSID Kit-268, Callipers-324 etc.
- **Under the Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojana** major Aids and Assistive Devices distributed were Walking sticks-1089, Wheel Chairs-250, Hearing Aids-773, Crutches-14, Tripod-417, Tetrapod-197, Walker Foldable-03, Denture Complete-45, Denture Partial-40, Spectacles-806 etc.

(VICE PRESIDENT PRESENTS NATIONAL AWARDS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES-2018)

- **The Vice-President of India** gave away the National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), 2018 to awardees at a function organized by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in New Delhi on 3rd December 2018 on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3rd December).
- **Minister of Social Justice** and Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Ministers of State of Social Justice Empowerment Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar, Shri Ramdas Athawale and Shri Vijay Sampla also graced the occasion.

ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN (AIC)-I,IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS/ MILESTONES OF THE CAMPAIGN

- **Accessible India Campaign (AIC)** was launched on December 3, 2015, for creating universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in Built Environment, Transport, and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem. So far, Access Audit of 1662 buildings in 50 cities has been completed by the auditors. Financial proposals for retrofitting of 1217 buildings have been received and sanction has been issued in respect of 910 buildings amounting to Rs.264.91 crores. All 34 International Airports and 48 Domestic Airports have been provided with accessible features viz. ramps, accessible toilets, lifts with Braille symbols and auditory signals. Out of 709 'A-1', 'A' & 'B' category Railway Stations, 670 railway stations have been provided with all Short-Term Facilities and 639 railway stations have been provided with all Long-Term Facilities. 8.4% Public Transport buses of 58 SRTUs have been provided overall accessibility. Out of 100 Central Government Ministries/Departments, Websites of 94 Ministries/Departments have been made accessible so far. Out of 917 identified websites of State Governments /UTs which are in the process of being made accessible through ERNET India, 217 States/UTs websites have been made live.
- **UNIQUE DISABILITY IDENTIFICATION (UDID) PROJECT** The Department has already initiated Unique Disability Identification project with a view to create national database for PwDs, to issue Unique Disability ID (UDID) Card along with disability certificate to everyone. In this regard, a web based software has been developed and is being shared with all the State Government and UTs, through training of their personnel. Once the project covers all persons with disabilities, UDID Card will be made mandatory for availing various governments benefits. So far, 463 districts of 27 States/UTs have generated 11.20 lakh e-UDID Cards.

OTHER IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS/MILESTONES OF THE YEAR 2018

- **100 Accessible** websites of various State Government/UTs under Accessible India Campaign were launched by the Union Minister for social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot on the occasion of 'National Conference on Improving Accessibility' on 19.01.2018.
- **Under the Scheme** of Assistance to Disabled persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP), in the month of February, 2018, Special camps were held at 8 locations in the country for distribution of aids and assistive devices to Divyangjan.
- **Union Minister of Social Justice** and Empowerment felicitated 17 member Blind Cricket World Cup winning Indian Team and presented them with a cash award of Rs.34 lakhs at a function in New Delhi on 21.2.2018. Union Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **The first and second meeting** of the Central Advisory Board on disability was held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister of social justice and Empowerment on 13.02.2018 and 5th October, 2018 in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. The meeting was attended by Ministers and their representatives from various States/UTs representatives from various Central Ministries/Departments and other nominated members of the board. The Board deliberated on various important policy issues in disability sector such as inclusive education, implementation of the RPWD act, Accessible India Campaign (AIC) etc.
- **The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities**, launched and Inclusive India Initiative. To spread the initiative in other parts of the country, a regional workshop was organized in Bhopal on 10th February 2018. The workshop was inaugurated by Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Hon'ble Chief Minister, M.P, in the presence of the Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment. The workshop was attended by experts in the field, students, NGOs, parents and other citizens. The objective of the workshop was to spread awareness on Inclusion of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

- **Review meeting with eight North-Eastern States** was held on 23.02.2018 at Guwahati, Assam to discuss issues relating to Schemes/Programmes/Initiative undertaken by the Department.
- **First Indian Sign Language Dictionary** of 3000 words, developed by Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), New Delhi, was launched by Dr Thaaarchand Gehlot, Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment on 23.03.2018. ISL dictionary consists of various categories of words, for example, legal terms, medical terms, academic terms, technical terms and daily use words.
- **The newly established ALIMCO Auxiliary Production Centre (AAPC)** Ujjain was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister, Social Justice & Empowerment on 28.04.2018. The state of art production centre established under the Modernization programme of ALIMCO.
- **Department organized the '1st Sensitization Meeting** of Stakeholders to make Delhi a Model Accessible City' on the 7th May, 2018. The Department has taken up the initiative to coordinate the meeting of all key stakeholders, sensitize them about the legal mandates and would hold supervisory role in this entire journey.
- **A Composite Regional Centre for Persons with Disabilities** at Narsingarh, West Tripura was inaugurated on 08th June, 2018 by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tripura in the presence of Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India and other dignitaries. The National IT Challenge for Youths with Disabilities, in the age group of 13-21 years (school going or school dropout had been held at NIT Kurukshetra, Haryana on 25-26 June 2018.
- **Department organized a meeting on 17.7.2018 with the Scientists** of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO) on the issue of commercialization of various technological interventions developed by DST for the benefits of persons with disabilities. The meeting was convened as a follow up of CoS meeting held on 2nd April, 2018 wherein CoS recommended that DST and DEPwD may jointly explore the possibilities of commercialization of various technological interventions developed by DST for benefit of PwDs.
- **A National workshop on Skill Development for Persons** with Disabilities was held on 3rd July, 2018 in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. The meeting was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister, SJE and attended by Hon'ble Minister Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, other stakeholders representing industry houses, Empanelled Training Partners (ETP) and State Government representatives etc. In the meeting, various core issues relating to promoting skill development for Persons with Disabilities, Skill curriculum design, participation of industry and experts were deliberated upon.
- **An Indian delegation headed by Hon'ble Minister** of Social Justice and Empowerment (SJE), comprising Secretary, DEPwD attended the Global Disability Summit held at London on 24th July, 2018. Hon'ble Minister (SJE), while reiterating India's commitment to international principles, put forth the initiatives taken by the Government of India for empowerment of persons with Disabilities. The conference was attended by global leaders of more than 40 countries. About 1100 delegates from all over the world attended the conference.
- **Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh** in the presence of the Hon'ble Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment and Hon'ble Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare conducted the Bhomi Pujan on 02.09.2018 for construction of a new building for the Composite Regional Centre (CRC), Gorakhpur at BRD Medical College, Gorakhpur. Estimated cost of project is Rs. 16.63 crores. On this occasion, services of CRC, Gorakhpur at Sitapur Eye Hospital, Gorkhpur was also inaugurated.
- **A National Conference was organised on 14th September**, 2018 at Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi to create awareness about important components of revised scheme of District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRC). Hon'ble Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment was Chief Guest of the Conference. The Conference was attended by Principal Secretaries of states, District Magistrates/Districts Commissioners, Chief Commissioner as well as State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities and implementation agencies.
- **Indian Sign language Research and Training Centre**, New Delhi celebrated "Sign Language Day" on 23.09.2018 at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi. Hon'ble Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The centre observed "Foundation Day" on 28.09.2018. Diploma Certificate (Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation) to 27 students of academic year 2016-17 were distributed.
- **A National Workshop on Physical and Mental Disabilities** in the light of Global Best Practices in Care. Rehabilitation and Research under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment was held on 23rd October 2018 at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. The workshop was hosted by National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), Chennai. The outcome of the workshop will support protocol development in the service deliveries and encourage adaptation of global best practices in Indian context.
- **A three day international event of the "Global IT challenge for Youth with Disabilities, 2018"** was hosted by the Department in association with the Ministry of Health & Welfare, Government of Republic of Korea from 9th to 11th November at Hotel Ashok, New Delhi. Ninety six youth with disabilities from 18 countries namely, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mongolia, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, UAE, India and UK participated in the event. India won three medals in the event.
- **An MoU has been signed** between the Government of Australia and the Government of India for cooperation in disability sector on 22.11.2018 during the visit of Hon'ble President to Australia. Indian High Commissioner to Australia signed the MoU on behalf of the Government of India.

Year End Review 2018 – Ministry of Shipping

- **Aided by Progressive Policy** Interventions the Capacity and Efficiency of Major Ports Rises Yet Again in 2018

- **Ease of Doing Business a Major Focus during the Year** Inland Water Transport Poised for Big Growth with the Launch of First Multimodal Terminal on Ganga, Rise in Cargo Movement and Expansion of Ro Ro Services
- **Sagarmala Sees** the Completion of 89 Projects Even as it Surges Ahead with Over 400 More Number of Seafarers in India Sees an Unprecedented Growth of 42.3% The year 2018 has been a significant one for the Ministry of Shipping. Bolstered by progressive policy interventions like amendment of Model Concession Agreement, revision of tariff guidelines and the various steps taken towards facilitating Ease of Doing Business, the major ports kept up their impressive performance of the past four years in terms of capacity addition and improvement of efficiency parameters.
- **The Sagarmala Programme** saw the completion of 89 projects, while 443 projects worth Rs. 4.32 lakh crore are under various stages of implementation and development.
- **The year was especially remarkable** for developments in the inland water transport sector. The inauguration of the multi modal terminal on River Ganga at Varanasi by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the first ever post - independence movement of container cargo from Kolkata to Varanasi on the river, and the commencement of integrated movement of cargo from Kahalgaon in Bihar to Pandu in Assam over three waterways – Ganga, Brahmaputra and the Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route, have firmly established that the vision of inland water as a cheaper and more environment friendly mode of transport is fast becoming a reality.
- **Cruise tourism was another area** with important developments like the inauguration of a modernized international cruise terminal at Chennai Port and the launch of Mumbai-Goa cruise service, as was the skill development sector with the setting up of Centre of Excellence in Maritime & Shipbuilding (CEMS) at Vizag and Mumbai, National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways and Coasts (NTCPWC), at IIT Madras in Chennai and the decision to set up Multiskill Development Centers (MSDC) at all major ports under Sagarmala.
- **The paragraphs below** give the sector-wise details of the major work done by the Ministry during the year.

PORTS

- **1.1 Ports** in India handle 90% by volume and 70% by value of India's external trade.
- **1.2 Capacity and Traffic** In order to meet the ever increasing trade requirements of the country, the focus has been on the infrastructure development and capacity enhancement of the Ports. Over the years the cargo handling capacity of the major ports has been growing steadily as under:
- **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust** 1.4 Award of projects and investment More than 50 Projects with an investment of over Rs. 10000 cr. and involving capacity addition of 90 MTPA are targeted for award during 2018-19. This is as against the 27 Projects were awarded during 2017-18, , involving an investment of Rs. 4146.73 crore and additional capacity of 21.93 MTPA created.
- **1.5 Improvement in efficiency parameters** While increasing the capacity of major ports, Ministry of Shipping has been striving to improve their operational efficiencies through policy interventions, procedural changes and mechanization. As a result key efficiency parameters i.e Average Turnaround Time and Average Output Per Ship Berth have improved considerably as shown below.

1.6 Policy initiatives

- **The achievement** of the Major Ports in terms of capacity augmentation, improved operational efficiency and higher operating surplus has been made possible due to certain pro-active policy initiatives taken by the Ministry of Shipping as explained below.
- **The Model Concession Agreement** has been amended with a view to obviate the problems being faced in execution of PPP Projects on account of certain provisions of the present MCA, in order to enhance confidence of investors and make the investments in the Port Sector attractive.
- **The tariff guidelines** were revised to provide flexibility to port operators to align the tariff closer to market tariff subject to achievement of certain performance standards.
- **100% FDI is being allowed in PPP Projects in the Port Sector.** A new Major Ports Authorities Bill to replace existing Major Port Trusts Act 1963 to provide greater autonomy and modernization of institutional structure is under consideration and has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16.12.2016. This is awaiting consideration and passing by the Lok Sabha.

- **v. Revised guidelines** have been issued to all the Major Ports for moving away from the practice of parking their surplus funds solely in the Public Sector Banks and investing their pension /provident/gratuity fund and surplus funds in accordance with guidelines of Ministry of Labour and Employment and Department of Public Enterprises, consistent with the provisions of Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

1.7 Ease of Doing Business

- **As per the World Bank report 2019** on Ease of Doing Business, India has taken a huge leap of 23 ranks from 100 in 2017-18 to 77 in 2018-19 indicating it is continuing its steady shift towards global standards. Towards facilitating 'Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)', Ministry of Shipping had identified various parameters for reducing dwell time and transaction costs in the Major Ports. These include elimination of manual forms, accommodation for laboratories to Participating Government Agencies (PGAs), Direct Port Delivery, Installation of Container Scanners, E-delivery orders; RFID based Gate-automation System, etc. These initiatives have already been implemented at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JN Port) and are being taken up in other Major Ports.
- **Elimination of manual Forms** has cut down long queues and waiting time for containers at the port gate and enabled faster evacuation of EXIM cargo and reduced congestion at port gates. The RFID solution has been implemented in all Major Ports to enhance security, remove bottlenecks for seamless movement of traffic across port gates, ensure tracking & tracing of man, material, vehicle, equipment, & other assets, and collection of revenue as per the notified rates.
- **A centralized web-based Port Community System (PCS)** has been operationalized across all Major Ports which enables seamless data flow between the various stakeholders viz. Customs, CFSS, Shipping Lines & ICDs, Lines/Agents, Surveyors, Stevedores, Banks, Container Freight Stations, Government regulatory agencies, Customs House agents, Importers, Exporters, CONCOR/Railways, etc. through common interface. The present system PCS 1.0 has been upgraded to PCS 1x.
- **Ministry of Shipping** has issued an order dated 27.3.2018 making use of e-invoice, e-payment and e-delivery order mandatory for all stakeholders across all Major Ports, all terminals within the Major Ports, private ports, private terminals and CFSS/ICDs.
- **Logistics Data Bank Service** under Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd. (DMICDC), for enabling track & trace movement of EXIM container has been implemented at JNPT and is being implemented at other Major Ports.
- **JN Port is the first port** to start Direct Port Delivery (DPD) and Direct Port Entry (DPE). DPD has increased from 5.42 % in March 2016 to 41.92% in August, 2018. In JNPT the percentage of Direct Port Entry of Export containers increased from 60% to 76.98% in August, 2018. The exporters are currently benefitted by savings in cost of about Rs.2,000/- per TEU and in time of 1 to 2 days while resorting to DPE.
- **At JN Port the dwell time** of import containers has reduced from 58.08 hrs. in 2016-17 to 50.82 hrs. in 2017-18. The dwell time of export containers has reduced from 88.35 hrs. in 2016-17 to 83.71 hrs. in 2017-18.
- **Work order for procurement** of 8 mobile container scanner has been issued. Site preparation at ports is in progress. Factory Acceptance Test (FAT) in respect of containerscanners meant to be procured for Paradip, Vishakhapatnam, New Mangalore, Mormugao, Kandla, Kamraj and Kolkata Ports have been done. Procurement of Drive through (Roads) scanner (Nos. 4) is under process. Selection of site for Drive through (Rail) scanner is also under process.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust** which is the pilot port for implementation of reforms under EoDB has undertaken a no. of initiatives for ensuring convenience to trade & reduction in cargo EXIM Dwell time. To ensure faster cargo evacuation, JNPT has set up a Customs Processing Zones, Centralized Parking Plaza, besides undertaking widening of Port Highways. It has also developed a Common Rail Yard. JNPT has procured electronic RTGCs for increasing yard productivity, besides making ground breaking initiatives for increasing Direct Port Delivery & Direct Port Entry to facilitate trade. All these reforms are regularly communicated to the stakeholders through website update, social media & regular stakeholder meetings.

1.8 Major Initiatives/Achievements during 2018

JNPT The Fourth Container Terminal (FCT) of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (Phase-I) was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. This is India's largest FDI Project in the port sector involving an investment of Rs. 7935 crore. With this the container handling facility at JNPT will increase from 5.15 million TEUs to 7.55 million TEUs.

- **Paradip Port Trust** The 2nd Major Port after Deendayal Port (Kandla) to achieve the milestone of handling 100 MT of cargo during 2017-18. Created an all time record by successfully completing movement of 27 Vessels within 20 Hrs. i.e. from 0600 hrs on 13th October, 2018 to 0200 hrs on 14th October, 2018.
- **On 29th October, 2018** introduced possibly first time in India, the Mediterranean Mooring Method to discharge edible oil from "MT Delfine" without using the berth.

- **VOCPT There was no night navigation** at the shallow water berth at VOCPT due to constraint in the available depth. The construction of Coastal berth along with dredging near the jetty and approaches were carried out during the month of April 2018. Subsequently with the lighting arrangement in the berth, the night navigation of shallow Water Berth for docking/un-docking was allowed from June, 2018.

Vishakhapatnam

- **Port projects worth Rs. 1062 crore** were inaugurated and foundation stone for port connectivity projects worth Rs. 679 crore were laid at Visakhapatnam on 13th July, 2018. These included upgradation of iron ore handling facility at Outer Harbour of Vizagport, Construction of Grade Separator from H-7 area to Port Connectivity Road, by-passing convent junction, under Sagarmala and Development of 12.7 km road connectivity to VPT from Shreelanagar Junction to Anakapalli-Sabbavaram/Pendurti- Anandapuram road (NH 16).
- **Kolkata For the first time at Kolkata Port Trust**, a Cape Size vessel M.V. Samjohn Solidarity carrying 1,64,928 MT of Dry Bulk (Coal) made a call at Sandheads Anchorage on 17.10.2018. The vessel discharged around 1 lakh MT of Coal on barges by two Floating Cranes; the entire cargo being discharged was brought to Floating Jetty at Haldia for discharge.
- **vi Storage charges** of the PPP Projects at Major Ports came under stress due to high Storage Charges. A committee under Chairman, Indian Ports Association (IPA) considered the issues. Based on the recommendations made by the said committee a methodology has been worked out for dealing with such abnormal storage charges and bring the stressed projects on track. Guidelines in this regard have been issued to the Major Ports on 11.07.2018.
- **Utilization of Surplus funds** per instructions issued by MoS in February, 2009, surplus funds were being invested by the Major ports in the Public Sector Banks (PSBs). The practice of the ports parking their surplus funds, solely in the fixed deposits with the PSBs, has been reviewed in the current economic scenario in the light of the guidelines on investment of Provident fund/pension fund/surplus funds issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and Department of Public Enterprises. In supersession of the earlier instructions, revised guidelines have been issued by this Ministry to all the Major Ports on 27.7.2018 on investing of their pension /provident/gratuity fund and surplus funds.
- **viii Relief and assistance to the flood affected areas in the Ernakulam district** wake of the recent unprecedented rains and floods in the state of Kerala, the Cochin Port helped in bringing relief materials to the State during the initial days. The Port also took several measures for providing relief and assistance to the flood affected areas in the Ernakulam district. These included organizing Relief Camps, medical aids assistance, food distribution, priority berthing of vessels bringing flood relief materials etc. Relief materials brought by Naval Ship INS Deepak, INS Mysore, INS Mumbai, INS Sharda and Coast Guard Vessels ICGS Vikram were also handled on priority at the port. Cochin Port Trust contributed Rs.62 lakhs to the Chief Minister Relief Fund comprising Rs. 31 lakhs as employee's one day salary and equal amount from the COPT's funds. Similarly, employees of Kolkata Port Trust also contributed one day's salary (Rs.83 Lakhs) to Kerala Chief Minister Distress Relief Fund (KCMDRF) and also carried relief material in containers free of cost from Kolkata to Cochin Port.
- **Award by Permanent Court of Arbitration** In an arbitration case involving one of the projects in Kolkata Port, Louis Dreyfus Armateurs (LDA) had invoked Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement and had taken the Union of India for arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In its award dated 11.09.2018, the Permanent Court of Arbitration has ordered the LDA to pay India (a) USD 540,885.30 towards India's share of the Tribunal and PCA costs of arbitration, and (b) USD 6,626,971.85 towards India's costs and expenses of legal representation and assistance.
- **Security Clearance of Bidders in PPP projects** Revised guidelines have been issued on 31st January, 2018 for enhancing the validity period of security clearance of bidders/ companies participating in Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects and dredging projects in Major Ports from three years to five years so as to harmonise it with the validity period followed by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **1.9 Chabahar Port Project** During the visit of the Iranian delegation to India in January 2018, a business meeting was organized in which number of prospective entrepreneurs interested in establishing units in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone participated. Issues relating to the investment opportunities in the development of Chabahar Port were also discussed during the meeting. The Interim operations contract for Chabahar Port was signed between the two sides on 17.02.2018. A bilateral meeting to discuss various issues relating to the Chabahar Port Project was held on 10.10.2018 in New Delhi between the Indian Delegation led by Secretary (Shipping) and Iranian Delegation led by Mr. Mohammad Rastad, Deputy Minister and Managing Director for Ports and Maritime organization (PMO) of Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranian delegation accompanied by MD, Indian Ports Global Ltd. (IPGL) and representative from Ministry of Shipping, also visited Jawaharlal Nehru Port to understand port operations.

SAGARMALA 2.1 Sagarmala Projects

- **More than 605 projects** having a total cost of Rs. 8.8 lakh crore (cr.) have been identified under Sagarmala. Of these, 89 projects worth Rs. 0.14 lakh crore are completed and 443 projects worth Rs. 4.32 lakh crore are under various stages of implementation and development. Sagarmala Program aims to promote port-led development with a view to reducing logistics cost for EXIM and domestic trade.

- **2.2 Port Capacity Target** Ministry of Shipping, along with the State Governments are striving to increase the overall port capacity to 3500+ million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) to cater to the projected traffic of 2500 MMTPA by 2025. Towards this end, 249 port modernization projects have been identified. Out of these, 107 port capacity expansion projects (cost: Rs. 67,962 cr) were identified from the port master plans of 12 major ports and are expected to add 794 MMTPA to the major port capacity over the next 20 years.
- **2.3 Re-rating of capacity of Major Ports** As per the Berthing Policy for Major Ports ,2016 approved by the Ministry of Shipping, a standardized methodology was laid down to calculate norms for dry bulk berths. An exercise was undertaken to benchmark port capacity with global standards set by the berthing policy and re-rate the capacities of major ports. The Declared capacity of major ports was 1066 MTPA as on 31.3.2017. After the re-rating exercise, the effective rated capacity and desired occupancy of major ports as on 31.3.2017 were 1359 MTPA and 989 MTPA respectively.
- **2.4 Port modernization** Under Project Unnati, global benchmarks were adopted to improve the efficiency and productivity Key Performing Indicators (KPIs) for 12 major ports. Around 116 initiatives were identified across 12 major ports to unlock more than 100 MTPA capacity just through efficiency improvement. Out of which, 91 initiatives have been implemented to unlock around 80 MTPA capacity.
- **2.5 Development of new ports** In addition to projects for capacity expansion of major ports, 6 new port locations, namely – VadHAVAN (Maharashtra), Enayam (Tamil Nadu), Tajpur (West Bengal), Paradip Outer Harbour (Odisha), Sirkazhi (Tamil Nadu), Belekeri (Karnataka) have been identified to increase overall cargo handling capacity

2.6 Port Connectivity Enhancement

- **Rail and road connectivity projects are being undertaken to enhance port connectivity to the hinterland**, Rail Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited (IPRCL) has taken up 32 works (cost : Rs. 18,253 cr) across 9 major ports of which 8 works (Rs. 175 cr) have been completed. In addition, 23 rail connectivity projects (Rs. 24,877 Cr) identified under Sagarmala are being taken up by Ministry of Railways out of which 7 projects (Rs. 2,491 cr) are completed. Further, 15 rail connectivity projects (Rs. 4,193 cr) have been taken up through Rail-ports and other operators out of which 3 projects (Rs 52 cr) are completed. A total of 52 projects (Rs. 44,605 cr) are in various stages of implementation by these agencies.
- **Indore- Manmad Rail Line** An MoU for implementation of the 362 km Indore- Manmad New Railway Line Project was signed on 28.08.2018 between Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Ministry of Railways, Govt of Maharashtra and Govt of Madhya Pradesh. The new project will reduce the distance from Mumbai/Pune to key central India locations by 171 kilometers, resulting in lower logistics costs. This is especially significant as the new railway line will pass through the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor nodes of Igatpuri, Nashik and Sinnar; Pune and Khed; and Dhule and Nardana.
- **Road** 112 road connectivity projects are being undertaken by various agencies. Out of the 112 road projects, 54 road projects (Rs. 22,158 Cr) are included under Bharatmalaprogramme. 102 projects will be executed by MoRTH and NHAI and the remaining 10 road projects by State PWD, Port Authorities and Sagarmala Development Company (SDC) in coordination with MoRTH / NHAI. A total of 5 projects (Rs 268 cr) have been completed and 97 projects (Rs 1,80,347 cr) are under implementation.

2.7 Port Led Industrialization

- **14 Coastal Economic Zones (CEZ)** covering all the Maritime States and Union Territories have been identified. CEZ perspective plans have been prepared and Detailed Master Plans will be prepared for 4 pilot CEZs - Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh - in the first phase of development. Policy framework for development of CEZ is under finalization based on recommendation of Inter-Ministerial Committee(IMC) for CEZ development under the aegis of CEO, NITI Aayog.
- **In addition, 38 potential port-linked** industrial clusters across Energy, Materials, Discrete Manufacturing and Maritime sectors have been identified. Out of these industrial parks, one mega food processing park at Satara, Maharashtra (Rs. 139 cr) has been completed and 3 Power Clusters (Rs. 76547 cr) in Krishnapatnam (AP), Ennore (TN) and Tuticorin (TN), 8 Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (Rs. 1704 cr) in AP, Gujarat, Odisha, Kerala, West Bengal and 3 Food Processing Parks (Rs. 1,348 cr) in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are under implementation. Also under development are: SEZ at JNPT (Rs. 12,624 Cr), Smart Industrial Port City (SIPC) at Paradip (Rs. 3,350 Cr) and Kandla (Rs. 11,147 Cr) and Coastal Employment Units (CEUs) at VoCPT and KPL.

2.8 Coastal Shipping Cabotage relaxation

- **To promote trade**, ease of doing business and Coastal Shipping in India as per the stated objectives of the Sagarmala Programme, relaxation under Section 406 and 407 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1958 with respect to cabotage was notified with respect to fertilizers, agricultural products, fisheries, horticultural and animal produce commodities, and containers. Based on feedback of industry on this relaxation, a clarification was further issued in September 2018 that the minimum movement of fertilizer to the extent of 50% of the total cargo onboard a ship is applicable only for cargo loaded at any Indian port for coastal movement.
- **Perspective plan on Coastal Shipping** A study with an objective to prepare a robust perspective plan with actionable recommendations to promote coastal and short sea shipping, integrating seamlessly with IWT and leveraging multimodal linkages with rail and road is underway in association with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). As a part of this study two stakeholder workshops were organized in June 2018 and October 2018, wherein an analysis of commodities that can be transported through coastal shipping and a corresponding analysis of potential origin destination pairs was presented to ports, shipping lines and industries that can use coastal shipping.

Coastal Berth Scheme

- **41 projects (Rs. 1,535cr)** have been sanctioned under the Coastal Berth Scheme for financial assistance of Rs. 633cr out of which Rs. 334 cr has been released to Major Ports/State Maritime Boards/State Governments. The Coastal Berth Scheme for creation of infrastructure to promote movement of cargo/passengers by sea/National waterways has been extended upto March 2020 and its scope has been expanded to cover the cost of preparation of DPR and capital dredging at Major Ports.
- **2.9 Skill development** Ministry of Shipping has undertaken skill gap analysis for the coastal community in 21 coastal districts and assisted domain ministries and state governments in implementation of action plan for them. As a result, 1917 people have been trained and 1123 placed in jobs.
- **To support the development** of the fishermen community, Ministry of Shipping is part-funding select fishing harbor projects in convergence with Department of Animal Husbandry Dairying & Fisheries (DADF) to improve livelihood of fishermen community. For this purpose, Rs. 323 Cr has been sanctioned for 13 projects (cost: Rs. 1189 Cr). These projects are expected to benefit over 1.5 Lakh fishermen and would have capacity to handle more than 2.3 Lakh tonnes of fish.
- **2.10 Centre of Excellence in Maritime & Shipbuilding (CEMS)** A Centre of Excellence in Maritime & Shipbuilding (CEMS) has been setup at Vizag and Mumbai in coordination with IRS & Siemens at a cost of Rs. 766 cr. The objective of the center is to meet the domestic skill requirement in ship design, manufacturing, operating and maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO). The long term purpose is to become an international nodal centre in South Asia, attracting students from neighboring countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia for skill development in the port and maritime sector. In 2018, the implementation of CEMS was initiated in both Vizag and Mumbai campuses. Workshops for orientation of stakeholders were held at both centres. The CEO, COO and other team members have been hired. Labs have been setup at both campuses. Training has also started in both campuses.
- **2.11 National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways and Coasts (NTPWC)** Ministry of Shipping has set up the National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways and Coasts (NTPWC), at IIT Madras in Chennai to provide innovative and research based engineering solutions to various issues related to ports, waterways and coasts in the country. NTPWC will act as a technology arm of Ministry of Shipping for providing the needful technological support to Ports, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and all other related institutions. The project cost of Rs 70.53 Cr is being shared by MoS, IWAI and the Major Ports. NTPWC will provide indigenous software and technology, make technical guidelines and standards and address port and maritime issues with models and simulations. The areas of applied research of NTPWC are 2D & 3D Modelling of Ocean, Coastal & Estuarine Flows, Sediment transport and morphodynamics, Navigation and Manoeuvring, Dredging & Siltation, Port and Coastal Engineering-Structures and Breakwaters, Autonomous Platforms & Vehicles, Experimental & CFD modelling of flow & Hull interaction, Hydrodynamics of multiple hulls and Ocean renewable energy.
- **NTPWC started functioning** in April 2018 from a new building within IITM. The staff has been hired and the 10 projects are currently being undertaken. The tender for equipments- Semateb and FRL have been issued and the tender for new campus construction is currently under approval process of IITM Board. The Ministry is also examining the matter of issuing of awarding work by MoS institutions nomination basis and a decision on it is expected soon. The first oversight committee meeting was held in July 2018. The next oversight committee meeting is being planned along with an outreach event at NTPWC, IITM
- **2.12 Multiskill Development Centres for Maritime Logistics** In order to achieve the vision of 100% skilled manpower at ports and fulfill skill requirements of the employers in the Port and Maritime sector, the development of Multiskill Development Centers (MSDC) at all major ports is being taken up under Sagarmala. In this regard, JNPT MSDC has already been setup and a private operating partner –All Cargo has been selected and the MoU has been signed. The process is underway at Chennai, Vishakapatnam and Cochin Ports.
- **2.13 Transshipment** Ministry of Shipping has issued a notification and general order for relaxation under section 406 and 407 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 for Coastal movement of EXIM Transshipment Containers and Empty Containers. This relaxation allows both Indian entities to charter foreign flagships and allow foreign flagged ships by shipping lines to ply on the coastal routes without the hassle of getting a license with conditionalities. The relaxation for EXIM transshipment containers and empty containers will (i) promote shifting of transshipment of cargo from foreign ports to Indian ports leading to increased profitability of Indian containers handling ports and employment generation, (ii) increase in competition amongst shipping lines leading to reduced freight rates making Indian trade more competitive, (iii) increased logistics efficiency due to enhanced competition will improve competitiveness of Indian EXIM trade, (iv) promote coastal transportation of containers, (v) upon establishment of ecosystem in India, Indian ports can potentially attract cargo originating/destined from/for foreign ports for consolidation at Indian ports and (vi) retention of foreign exchange in India.

INLAND WATER TRANSPORT (IWT)

- **3.1 Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the implementation of the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) on 03.01.2018 at an estimated cost of Rs. 5369 crore with technical and financial assistance of the World Bank. The objective of JMVP is to improve navigability of National Waterway-I (NW-1) for plying of vessels of up to 2000 Dead Weight Tonnage (DWT). The major activities under the project are construction of multi-modal terminals, jetties, river information system, channel marking, navigational lock, river training and conservancy works. It is scheduled to be completed by March, 2023. The Loan Agreement and Project Agreement relating to IBRD loan of USD 375 million were signed on 02.02.2018. and these have become effective from 23.3. 2018. The status of implementation of different components of JMVP is given below:-
 - **(a) Fairway Development** The work has commenced for providing least assured depth on the stretch between Farakka and Kahalgaon (146 kms) .Similarly, for the Sultanganj-Mahendrapur stretch (74 Kms) and Mahendrapur-Barh stretch (71 Kms) evaluation of tenders is in progress.
 - **(b) Multi-modal Terminal, Varanasi** The multimodal terminal built at a cost of Rs 206 crore with a current capacity of 1.26 MTPA was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 12.11.2018. It is the first multimodal terminal on river Ganga which is expected to generate 500 direct employment and 2000 indirect employment opportunities.
 - **(c) Multi-modal Terminal, Sahibganj** The construction of the terminal was awarded at a cost of Rs. 280.90 crore and is scheduled to be completed in June, 2019. 54.81% work has been completed so far.
 - **(d) Multi-modal Terminal, Haldia** Work for construction of the Terminal at a cost of Rs. 517.36 crore was awarded on 30.06.2017 and is scheduled to be completed in December, 2019. 22.43% work has been completed so far.
 - **(e) New Navigational Lock, Farakka** The work was awarded on 24.11.2016 at a cost of Rs. 359.19 crore and is scheduled to be completed in April, 2019. 27.97% work has been completed so far.
- **3.2 Freight Village and Logistic Hub at Varanasi** To improve logistics efficiency, cargo aggregation, warehousing facilities and multimodal transportation, a Freight Village and Logistic Hub is proposed at Varanasi to be set up in continuation of the multi-modal terminal as part of the JMVP. The proposal for undertaking the pre-investment activities relating to setting up of the Project at an estimated cost of Rs.165 crore was appraised by the Delegated Investment Board (DIB) and approved by the Competent Authority.

3.3 Development of NW-4

- **As part of Phase-I** of the development of NW-4 from Muktiyala to Vijaywada, mainly for facilitating movement of construction material for Amravati, the upcoming capital city of Andhra Pradesh, Ro-Ro movement commenced in March 2018 and total quantity of Cargo moved till October, 2018 is 2.35 lakhs MT.
- **3.4 Development of eight (08) new NWs** Mandovi (NW-68), Zuari (NW-111), Cumbarjua (NW-27), Barak (NW-16), Gandak (NW-37), Rupnarayan (NW-86), Alappuzha-Kottayam-Athirampuzha Canal (NW-9) and Sunderbans (NW-97), were considered for development during 2017-18 and the progress thus far is given below:-
 - **A Tripartite MoU** has been signed on 03.05.2018 between IWAI, Marmugao Port Trust (MPT) and Captain of Ports, Govt. of Goa for the development of three NWs (27, 68 & 111) of Goa. Tendering by MPT for floating jetties and aids to navigation is in advanced stage. The bandalling and channel marking in Gandak river (NW-37) has been taken up and work is continuing in 2018-19 .
 - **Maintenance dredging** for fairway development work in Silchar-Bhanga stretch of river Barak (NW-16) has commenced. In Sunderbans waterways (NW-97), work order has been issued for dredging work in May, 2018 and tender for floating pontoon terminal has been invited. In Rupnarayan river (NW-86), work has been awarded for setting up of one floating terminal. Tender for dredging work is in progress.
 - **In Alappuzha – Kottayam – Athirampuzha Canal** (NW-9), supply order for night navigation facilities has been issued and supply of buoys completed in September, 2018. Dredging is proposed departmentally.

3.5 New Ro-Ro Services

- **Ro-Ro services between** Ibrahimpatnam and Lingayapalem on NW-4 have commenced thereby reducing road distance of approximately 70 km.
- **IWAI, in collaboration** with Assam Government, has launched a new RO-RO facility connecting Neamati-Majuli island in Assam on 12 Oct 2018. The facility is being provided by IWAI vessel, Bhupen Hazarika having a capacity to carry 8 trucks and 100 passengers. The Ro-Ro facility traverses a distance of only 12.7 km on the river route which has cut down the circuitous road route of 423 km that trucks take from Neamati-Majuli Island via Tezpur Road Bridge.
- **3.6 Procurement of Ro-Ro Vessels** IWAI has signed an agreement with M/s. Cochin Shipyard Limited for construction and supply of 10 Ro-Ro/Ro-Pax vessels at a cost of Rs 110 cr. on 11.07.2018. The vessels will be delivered between June, 2019 to December, 2019 for deployment in NW-1, 2 and 3.

3.7 Movement of Cargo on NWs

- **IWAI has been making** special efforts for promoting movement of cargo on National Waterways. In the first half of 2018-19, cargo traffic has increased to 33.8 MMT which is 102 % more as compared to 16.7 MMT in the same period in 2017-18. The prominent initiatives are given below:-
- **Completion of the trial run** of the longest haul of IWT cargo over a distance of 2085 kms from Kahalgaon (Bihar) on NW-1 to Dhubri (Assam) on NW-2 via the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route in October 2018. The cargo comprising of 1235 MT of fly ash was transported in IWAI flotilla tug "Trisul" with dumb barges "Ajay" & "Dikhu".
- **Transportation of 925 MT** of imported coal from Haldia dock complex on NW-1 to Dhubri on NW-2 using Indo – Bangladesh protocol route covering a distance of 1205 km.
- **The first movement of container** cargo on NWs for transportation of 16 containers of PepsiCo products from Kolkata to Varanasi (1280km) completed over a period of 12 days in November 2018. Return journey from Varanasi to Kolkata carried fertilizer of IFFCO Phulpur, Dabur products and PepsiCo products.
- **3.8 Connecting cargo owners and shippers** The IWAI launched a dedicated portal to connect cargo owners and shippers with real time data on availability of vessels. The landmark e-connect measure will enable direct interaction among the vessel operators, shippers and cargo owners as currently, there is no platform for furnishing information on the availability of vessels in the market. It has been designed and developed by the in-house IT Department and the Traffic Wing of IWAI as part of its preparedness for optimal use of its ongoing capacity development on various National Waterways. Named as the Forum of Cargo-Owners and Logistics-Operators (FOCAL), the link of the portal is available on the homepage of IWAI website www.iwai.nic.in.
- **3.9 Modern new ship designs for Ganga** 13 standardized state of art ship designs suitable for large barge haulage in low draft on river Ganga (NW-1) were made public by the IWAI on 31.08.2018. The designs will help overcome the unique navigation challenges river Ganga throws up due to its complex river morphology, hydraulics, acute bends, shifting channels, meanders and current. These will also serve as an enabler for domestic shipbuilding industry working on inland vessels and open up huge possibilities for cargo and passenger movement on NW-1. Available free on the IWAI website, the new designs will obviate the dependence of Indian Shipbuilders on foreign ship design for IWT and translate into a savings of Rs. 30-50 lakh in the building of a vessel.

SHIPPING 4.1 Directorate General of Shipping

- **No. of ships and seafarers** The number of ships under Indian Flag on 31.12.17 was 1374 while as on 31.10.18 the number of ships is 1399 [12.79 Million Tonnes]. There is an increase of 25 numbers of ships in last 10 months
- **The number of seafarers** in India has seen an unprecedented growth of 42.3% due to various policy level changes brought in by the Government in the last four years. The number of seafarers in December '17 was 1,54,349 while the number of seafarers now has increases to 1,79,599.

Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

- **The applicability of provisions** of Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 has been extended to merchant vessels of below 500 Gross Tonnage, thereby ensuring the benefit of welfare measures available under the Convention to seafarers working on smaller ships as well.
- **Ease of doing business** A Module has been developed and implemented for Recruitment and Placement Agencies [RPS] for filing fresh applications, annual inspections and renew inspection online. This will facilitate easy approval of RPS agencies and their monitoring.
- **New CDC Rules, 2017**, which ease the process of issuance of CDC based on five STCW courses has been put into force w.e.f 14.01.18, for an ease of seafarers. The issuance of CDC is completely online. There is now no need to undergo long time pre-sea courses for getting CDC by the seafarers.

Admiralty Act and Rules

- **The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Act, 2017**, has been enforced w.e.f. 01.04.18. As per new Act High Courts of all the coastal states shall exercise admiralty jurisdiction over maritime claims which include several aspects not limited to goods imported and chattel as earlier, but also other claims such as claims in relation to payment of wages of seamen, loss of life, salvages, mortgage, loss or damage, services and repairs, insurance, ownership and lien, threat of damage to environment etc.
- **The Act** accords highest priority to payment of wages of the seafarers. The Act also provides for protection against wrongful and unjustified arrest and has provision for transfer of cases from one High Court to other High Court.
- **The Admiralty (Assessors) Rules** drafted under the Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of maritime Claims) Act, 2017 has been notified. This will facilitate the appointment of Assessors for use of the Admiralty Courts as and when required during the admiralty proceedings.
- **India re-elected to IMO Council** India has been re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organization [IMO] under Category "B" representing the States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade, for the biennium 2018-19, at the 30th session of the Assembly of the IMO, held at London on 1st December, 2017, by securing second highest votes in the said category.
- **4.2Cruise shipping** i. A modernized International Cruise Terminal at Chennai Port was inaugurated on 12.10.2018. ii. Mumbai Goa cruise service was launched at a function organized on 20.10.2018

4.3 Shipbuilding

- **The Government of India** has an ongoing Rs. 4000 crores Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy for 10 years (2016-2026) to encourage domestic shipbuilding. Under this policy, financial assistance is granted to Indian Shipyards equal to 20% of lower of 'Contract Price' or the 'Fair Price' or actual receipt of each vessel built by them. The rate of financial assistance will be reduced by 3% after every three years.
- **An updated version** of the web portal launched by this Ministry for processing applications is being operated by DG (S).
- **DG (S) has received applications** for in principle approval / financial release for 30 vessels. Ministry of Shipping has so far released Rs. 11.89 cr. for 4 vessels to 3 Indian Shipyards.

4.4 Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)

- **CSL has launched** two 500 pax vessels for Andaman & Nicobar Administration for interisland transportation on 30.10.2018.
- **CSL to construct** and supply two Ro-Ro and eight Ro-Pax vessels to IWAI for which an Agreement was signed on 11.07.2018. The vessels are expected to be delivered between June, 2019 to December, 2019 for deployment in NW-1, NW-2 and NW-3.

- **Foundation stone was laid** on 30.10.2018 for setting up India's largest Dry Dock at Cochin Shipyard costing Rs. 1799cr. The new large sized stepped dock at CSL premises has a length of 310 m, width of 75/60 m and draft of upto 9.5M. AnMOU was signed by CSL on January 18, 2018 with Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) for export of Defence vessels incorporating Defence systems developed by DRDO and produced by Indian OEMs.
- **CSL has signed a contract** on 29.1.2018 for construction of 16 nos. Tuna Long Lining & Gillnetting Fishing Vessels under the diversification of trawl fishing boats from Palkbay into deep sea fishing boats under Central sector on Blue Revolution Scheme with financial assistance from Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu.

4.4 Ship repair facilities

- **MOU signed by CSL and Mumbai Port Trust** on 11.1.2018 for operations and management of ship repair facility and allied services at Indira Dock.
- **MOU signed with Kolkata Port Trust** on 17.3.2018 for operations and management of ship repair facility and allied services at Netaji Subhash Dock.

4.5 Shipping Corporation of India

- **In recognition of SCI's** commitment to the principles of gender diversity & equality at the workplace reflected by the representation of women across hierarchical grades including SCI Board, SCI was awarded 'Winner' under the category 'Contribution of Women in PSEs'.

4.6 Andaman Lakshadweep and Harbour Work

- **The Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works (ALHW)** is entrusted with the responsibility of formulating and implementing the programme of the Government for providing Ports and Harbour structures including allied facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. The following works were undertaken/initiated in 2018 at A&N and Lakshadweep Islands:-
- **Restoration of damaged Breakwater** at Hut Bay - Placing of CC block of size 1m x 1m x 1m and 8T Tetra pods from 800m to 1200 m chain age at Sea side of Breakwater at Hut Bay in Little Andaman at an estimated cost of Rs. 14.66 crore and it will be completed by August, 2019.
- **Restoration of damaged breakwater** at Kalpeni Island in Lakshadweep at an estimated cost of Rs. 34.56 crore and the project would be completed by June, 2020.
- **Construction of Sea wall /Shore protection work** at Mus in Car Nicobar in Andaman & Nicobar Islands at an estimated cost of Rs. 49.19 crore. The project would be completed by Dec, 2020.

4.7 Indian Maritime University

- **Training programs** for African officials have been completed under the International Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program of Ministry of External Affairs in the domain of Port Management, Marine Engineering and Ocean Engineering.
- **IMU conducted** one day workshop in its Kolkata Campus on 26.11.2018, organized by CIMAC (Conseil International des Machines a Combustion) – the International Council of Internal Combustion Engines, based at Frankfurt, Germany.

- **IMU is in final stages** of complete automation of the examination process with the proposed introduction of onscreen valuation of answer scripts.

4.8 Directorate General of Lighthouse and Lightships

- **DGLL organized Aids to Navigation (AToN) Manager Course Level-1** from 23/07/2018 to 17/08/2018 at NTI Kolkata. Participants from India and other countries viz. Sudan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Somalia, Singapore, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, Indonesia, Fiji attended the course.
- **DGPS (Differential GPS)** is a system to provide positional corrections to GPS signals. DGPS uses a fixed, known position to adjust real time GPS signals to eliminate pseudorange errors. Under Recapitalisation (Replacement of Equipment) of Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) Phase I, equipment at 13 DGPS sites have been upgraded to Differential Global Navigation Satellite system (DGNSS).
- **The upgraded system** has capability to respond to Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) / Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) signals.

5. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

- **Bangladesh** As a follow up of an MoU signed by India and Bangladesh for development of fairway in the Ashuganj-Zakiganj and Sirajganj-Daikhawa stretches of Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route by sharing the cost on 80: 20 (India : Bangladesh) basis Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has issued the work orders for both the stretches and work is expected to commence shortly.
- **The Shipping Secretary Level** talks and the 19th Meeting of Standing Committee on Protocol on Inland Waterways Transit and Trade were held between India and Bangladesh at New Delhi on 24th and 25th October, 2018. At these meetings, the two sides agreed to extend the Protocol route and include new ports of call. Specifically, it was decided to include a stretch of Rupnarayan River (National Waterway-86) in the protocol route and to declare Kolaghat in West Bengal and Chilmari in Bangladesh as new ports of call; declare Badarpur on river Barak (NW- 16) as the extended port of call of Karimganj in Assam and Ghorasal of Ashuganj in Bangladesh on reciprocal basis. Currently 3.5 MMT of cargo is transported on protocol routes through inland waterways which is expected to increase substantially after the formal declaration of additional ports of calls and extension of protocol routes.
- **India and Bangladesh** agreed that a Joint Technical Committee will explore the technical feasibility of operationalisation of Dhulian-Rajshani protocol route upto Aricha and the reconstruction and opening up of Jangipur navigational lock on river Bhagirathi subject to the provisions of the Treaty between India and Bangladesh on Sharing of Ganga Waters at Farakka, 1996. This move has the potential to reduce the distance to Assam by more than 450 kms on the protocol routes.
- **To bring about significant reduction** in logistics cost and faster delivery of Bangladesh export cargo, Indian side raised the point regarding permitting 'Third country' EXIM Trade under Coastal Shipping Agreement and PIWTT by allowing transshipment through ports on the East Coast of India. Bangladesh agreed to hold stakeholder consultations and revert on the matter.
- **The following Agreement/Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) were signed by the two countries on 25.10.18:-** To facilitate connectivity to North Eastern States through Kolkata and Haldia ports, movement of EXIM cargo and reduce logistic costs, an Agreement on the use of Chattogram and Mongla Port for movement of goods to and from India between the people's Republic of Bangladesh and the Republic of India.
- **To open up connectivity** for passengers and tourists from the two countries through Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of MoU on Passenger and Cruise Services on the Coastal and Protocol route between India and Bangladesh.
- **To add Pangaon from Bangladesh and Dhubri** in Assam as new Ports of Call, an Addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT).
- **Nepal** As a follow up of the decision taken in April, 2018 by the Prime Ministers of India and Nepal to introduce inland waterways connectivity between the two countries, Technical Scoping Missions have visited each other's facilities and discussions have been held at Kathmandu and Kolkata in May and September 2018, respectively. The development and training requirements of Nepal IWT sector, reduction of logistic cost, transshipment options through Sahibganj (Jharkhand) & Kalughat (Patna) to Nepal from Kolkata have been discussed.

Memorandum of Understanding

- **An MoU was signed** with Republic of Korea on Mutual Recognition of Certificate of Competency of sea farers. It will open up employment opportunities on Korean Ships for more than 1.5 Lakh Indian Seafarers.
- **An MoU Signed with Malta** on Maritime Cooperation in the field of research and innovation related to IMO.



Ministry of Steel initiative of Make in Steel - Make in India #myLOVESTEELideas to popularise use of steel Turnaround of Steel CPSEs in 2017-18

- **The National Steel Policy 2017** and Domestically Manufactured Iron & Steel Products Policy 2017, has led to huge growth in both production and consumption of steel. The per capita consumption has risen from 59 kgs in 2013-14 to 69 kgs in 2017-18. India has produced 103 Million Tonnes of steel in 2017-18 and will soon become the second largest producer of steel in the world in the year 2018.
- **The capacity of steel production** has increased from 97 Million Tonnes in 2012-13 to 138 Million Tonnes in 2017-18. The Government of India's emphasis and commitment to building infrastructure, Make-in-India and Smart City Mission has led to the consumption of steel growing dramatically. More than 50% production is in the secondary steel sector comprising of small producers spread across the country employing a large number of people directly or indirectly.
- **Ministry of steel is promoting rural and urban development** through low cost housing designs by INSDAG and various other structures like bridges, culverts, anganwadis, panchayat halls and community toilet. Ministry of Steel has in collaboration with M/o Railways, Road Transport, Rural Development, Environment and Forest, Coal and Consumer Affairs increased steel usage and fast tracking of steel projects.
- **India is currently the world's 3rd largest** producers of crude steel in 2017 and already has become 2nd largest producers in the period Jan to Oct 2018. India is currently the world's largest producer of direct reduced iron(DRI)/sponge iron.
- **The country is 3rd largest consumers** of finished steel in world in 2017 and expected to be 2nd largest consumers soon Memorandum of Understanding [MoUs] With Capital Goods Manufactures Under 'Make In India' Initiative
- **The National Steel Policy - 2017** envisages creation of 300 million tonnes (MT) of steel capacity in the country by 2030-31 as against existing capacity of about 137 MT. The estimated import of plant and equipment, for reaching 300 MT capacity, will be around USD 25 billion. Further, it is estimated that at 300 MT capacity level, India will have to spend about USD 500 million annually for import of proprietary and other spares.
- **Ministry of Steel organized a Conclave** on "Capital Goods in Steel Sector: Manufacturing in India" in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on 23.10.2018. The Conclave is an initiative to promote domestic capacity and capability building and manufacturing of capital goods in steel sector.
- **To accomplish the Vision of the Government of India**, SAIL signed MOUs during the Conclave with Capital Goods manufacturers' (BHEL, HEC and MECON) so as to give a boost to indigenization of manufacturing of Capital goods related to steel sector.

PM unveils important projects relating to housing and urban development in Maharashtra

- **PM unveils** important projects relating to housing and urban development in Maharashtra The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today unveiled important projects related to housing and urban transportation during his visit to Maharashtra.
- **At a public meeting in Kalyan**, the Prime Minister laid the Foundation Stone of two important metro corridors. These are the Thane-Bhiwandi-Kalyan Metro; and the Dahisar-Mira-Bhayander Metro. The two corridors, once completed, will greatly facilitate public transport in the area.
- **Also in Kalyan**, he launched the 90,000 units' EWS and LIG Housing scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. The total worth of projects for which the Foundation Stone was laid in Kalyan today is about Rs. 33,000 crore.
- **In Pune, the Prime Minister laid the Foundation Stone of Pune Metro Phase-3.** Addressing the gathering in Kalyan, the Prime Minister highlighted how the pace of infrastructure and public transport development had been accelerated by the Union Government. He reiterated the Union Government's vision of "Housing For All" by 2022.
- **Addressing the gathering in Pune**, he said the government is placing great emphasis on connectivity infrastructure. He said the focus is on providing next generation infrastructure, and integration of the transport sector. He said that through Startup India, and Atal Innovation Mission, India is emerging as a centre for technology.

National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Project

- **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Project** Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, while giving a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today, gave details on the status of implementation of National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Project. Paperless Assembly or e-Assembly is a concept involving of electronic means to facilitate the work of Assembly. It enables automation of entire law making process, tracking of decisions and documents, sharing of information. NeVA aims to bring all the legislatures of the country together, in one platform thereby creating a massive data depository without having the complexity of multiple applications, the Minister said.
- **Shri Meghwal stated that NeVA** is a device neutral and member centric application created to equip them to handle diverse House Business smartly by putting entire information regarding member contact details, rules of procedure, list of business, notices, bulletins, bills, starred/unstarred questions and answers, papers laid, committee reports etc. in their hand held devices/ tablets and equip all Legislatures/ Departments to handle it efficiently. Citizens would also gain access to this information at their fingertips.
- **NeVA will completely eliminate** the process of sending out a notice/request for collection of data. Through the cloud technology (Meghraj), data deployed can be accessed anywhere at any time. Further, live webcasting of Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TVs is also available on this application. Doordarshan has already been enabled with provision to incorporate similar facility in respect of State Legislatures.
- **Shri Meghwal said that e-Vidhan** is a Mission Mode Project (MMP) included in Digital India Programme and Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) is the 'Nodal Ministry' for its implementation in all the 31 States/ UTs with Legislatures. The total project cost of the project is over 738 crores and funding of NeVA is on the pattern of Central Sponsored Scheme i.e. 60:40; and 90:10 for North East & hilly States and 100% for UTs. The funding for e-Vidhan is provided by the MoPA and technical support by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). In order to promote the rolling out NeVA, the MoPA has consulted all State Governments.
- **The Minister said that the success of the implementation** of NeVA lies with the States/UTs, the key stakeholders of the project. MoPA organized a two-day workshop on 24th and 25th September, 2018 at New Delhi, to familiarize officers from State Legislatures/Councils with the features and functionalities of NeVA. MoPA is providing regular training through Video Conferencing to all Legislatures. So far, such successful trainings have taken place at 10 such States viz. Punjab, Telangana, Karnataka, Sikkim, Bihar, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Kolkata. In order to provide assistance to the Members, a NeVA Kendra (e-Facilitation Center) will be setup at each location under a Nodal Officer. Himachal Pradesh is already the first Digital Legislature of the country. Other states like Punjab, Madhya Pradesh & Sikkim are also in various stages of transformation and their initiatives are highly commendable.
- **For implementation of e-Vidhan MMP for achieving paperless** state legislature and electronic information services delivery to legislators and other stakeholders, tripartite memorandum of understanding will be signed among MoPA, Government of India, Government of State and State Legislatures, the Minister said.
- **Shri Meghwal stated that the Central Project Monitoring Unit (CPMU)** under MoPA will be responsible for reviewing the financial and technical progress of the project. The State will prepare detailed project report (DPR) and gap analysis report. State level project monitoring committee will carry out the technical scrutiny and financial scrutiny of the DPR and after final approval of the same will be send to the MoPA for approval. After the technical and financial scrutiny, funds will be released for project implementation.
- **The State Government will appoint a Secretary level officer** to be designated as the nodal officer/representative for e-Vidhan implementation in the State Legislature(s). State Government will bear the funds required for running of e-Vidhan MMP after 3 years. The State Government will ensure capacity building for the effective implementation of e-Vidhan MMP module. State Government/Legislature will undertake maintenance and replacement of ICT equipment after 3 years. Release of next instalment would not be made in case the utilization certificate and confirmation of release of funds by the state government of their share is not received by the CPMU.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana

- **Antyodaya Anna Yojana** As per the guidelines issued by the Government, the AAY families are to be identified by States/Union Territories (UTs) as per the following criteria:
- **(i) Landless agriculture labourers**, marginal farmers, rural artisans /craftsmen, such as potters, tanners, weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, slum dwellers and persons earning their livelihood on daily basis in the informal sector like porters, coolies, rickshaw pullers, hand cart pullers, fruit and flower sellers, snake charmers, rag pickers, cobblers, destitute and other similar categories in both rural and urban areas;

- **(ii) Households headed by widows** or terminally ill persons/disabled persons/ persons aged 60 years or more with no assured means of subsistence or societal support; (iii) Widows or terminally ill persons or disabled persons or persons aged 60 years or more or single women or single men with no family or societal support or assured means of subsistence; (iv) All primitive tribal households; (v) All eligible Below Poverty Line (BPL) families of HIV positive persons.
- **Foodgrains under Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** are given family wise, hence, a statement giving States/UTs wise number of families covered under AAY are at Annexure-I.
- **Requests have been received from few State Governments** to increase the number of families covered under AAY, but it could not be acceded to as the number is fixed for every State/UT. However, States/UTs are advised from time-to-time to review the existing list of AAY families and remove the ineligible households so as to include only the most eligible.

Empowerment of Economically Backward Classes

- **Empowerment of Economically Backward Classes** A Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship for Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) students is being implemented in entire country including Delhi with the objective to provide financial assistance to the students of Economically Backward Class studying at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education. The scholarships will be open to Indian nationals belonging to General Category (Other than Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe and Other Backward Classes) and the total income from all sources of the employed candidate or his/her parents/guardians in case of unemployed candidate shall not exceed Rs.1.00 lakh per annum.
- **Another Scheme namely Dr. Ambedkar Scheme** of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for OBCs/EBCs" is being implemented with the objective to award interest subsidy to meritorious EBC students so as to provide them better opportunities for higher education in abroad and enhance their employability. The total income from all sources of the employed candidate or his/her parents/guardians in case of unemployed candidate shall not exceed Rs.2.50 lakh per annum
- **From Financial Year 2018-19,National Backward Classes** Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) has included Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) defined as persons with annual family income less than Rs. 1.00 lakh in its target group to provide them benefit of concessional loan and training for skill development for upgradation of their technical and entrepreneurial skills.
- **Government of NCT of Delhi has not sent the proposal** for release of funds under Centrally Sponsored Scheme named Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship for Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) students so far.

Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes

- **During the period of 2015-18**, 84 companies owned by Scheduled Castes Entrepreneurs has been assisted under Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes. SC entrepreneurs are scattered mostly in un-organized sectors. Since, this is a new scheme launched in 2014; the SC Entrepreneurs have less awareness about this scheme. Requisite approvals / permission/ clearances for project implementation takes time. To overcome all these challenges various SC Entrepreneurs workshops/ meets/ Conferences across the country have been organized by IFCI. Advertisements in various languages across the country have been published. Beside SC entrepreneurs are being provided with guidance proactively with handholding support.

Year End Review 2018- Ministry of Home Affairs

- **Major achievements of MHA:** Smooth conduct of local body elections in J&K, AFPSA lifted from parts of North-East, peaceful rollout of NRC in Assam, Improvement in LWL scenario, Smart fence on Western border, Launch of single digit pan-India emergency phone number '112', First India-China Agreement on Bilateral Security Cooperation and Unveiling of the National Police Memorial
- **Highlights** The Internal Security scenario during the year 2018 remained largely peaceful while the situation on the borders with Bangladesh, Myanmar and China has significantly improved. On the Western borders, the Security Forces have retaliated with equal measure to ceasefire violations and neutralised infiltration attempts. In J&K, concerted anti-militancy Operations have resulted in the elimination of a large number of terrorists while the local body elections

were conducted smoothly. In the North-East, the security scenario has vastly improved during the last four years with the result the AFSPA was lifted from Meghalaya & parts of Arunachal Pradesh this year; the Draft NRC in Assam was published without any incidence of violence and the Final NRC is on course. In the hinterland, the LWE affected districts have shrunk from 76 in 2013 to just 58.

- **Under the Modernization of Police Forces (MPF)** programme, two pilot projects of smart fencing were unveiled along the Indo-Pak International Border in Jammu. Launch of a single digit pan-India emergency phone number '112', under the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS), has been heralded in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland. MHA set up a new Division to address Women's Safety issues while two separate portals, namely – Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) and National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), furthered Women's Safety issues.
- **Enhancement of Centre's share in the State Disaster Response Fund** from 75% to 90%, tremendous success of e-Visa, First India-China High Level Meeting on Bilateral Security Cooperation, conduct of regular meetings of the Zonal Councils, dedication of the National Police Memorial to the nation at the hands of Prime Minister and new Police Medals instituted are some of the other highlights of the Ministry of Home Affairs during the year gone by. J&K: Security Forces launch counter-terrorism Operations; successful conduct of local body elections
- **In Jammu and Kashmir**, amidst recurring incidents of stone pelting in the Kashmir Valley, the Union Government took a major conciliatory initiative in May, 2018 by declaring the Suspension of Operations in the State coinciding with the holy Ramazan month; however, after a review it was not extended beyond the Ramazan period following which the Security Forces launched concerted anti-militancy Operations resulting in significant gains. 238 terrorists were killed in as many as 587 incidents while 86 Security Forces personnel were martyred and 37 civilians killed this year as on December 2, 2108. In June the Union Ministry of Home Affairs conveyed its approval for raising two women Battalions for J&K Police.
- **Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh** paid a 2-day visit to J&K on June 7-8, 2018 where he announced sanction of grants-in-aid amounting to Rs. 14.30 crore for Bock level sports in the state under the 'Khelo India' Scheme by the Union Sports Ministry. The Union Home Minister paid another two-day visit to J&K the next month, on July 4-5, 2018, during which he reviewed the security situation and developmental issues in the State.
- **On 28th September MHA announced** New Initiatives in J&K undertaken by the State Government pursuant to the review meeting on 4-5 July, 2018 during Union Home Minister's visit to the state. Most significant of these was the peaceful conduct of the historic Local Body Elections. Ahead of the landmark local body elections in the State, the Union Home Minister again visited Srinagar on 23rd October and reviewed the security situation.
- **The local body elections helped re-establish** the long overdue grassroots level democracy in J&K. The urban local body elections were held after 2005 and Panchayat elections after 2011. These elections have paved the way for making available nearly Rs. 4,335 Crores of 14th Finance Commission Central grants to the duly constituted local bodies. Central Government provided all possible support to the State Government for smooth conduct of these elections including deployment of Central forces in sufficient numbers.
- **The Leh and Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Councils** have been strengthened and empowered to become the most autonomous councils in the country to address various issues being faced by people living in the remote areas of Ladakh region. The LAHDC & KAHDC have been given more powers to levy and collect local taxes. Control has been given over functioning of various departments as well as the Government employees working for the subjects that stand transferred to them.
- **Considering the crucial role being played by the Special Police Officers** in anti-militancy operations in J&K, MHA enhanced their honorarium from Rs 6,000 per month to 9,000 on completion of 5 years and Rs 12,000 on completion of 15 years. MHA also approved a scheme of Rs 5.5 Lakh financial assistance to nearly 5,764 West Pakistan Refugees settled in J&K. Peaceful North-East: AFSPA lifted from Meghalaya & parts of Arunachal; Peaceful rollout of Draft NRC; pacts with more insurgent groups
- **The security scenario in the North East** is constantly improving. Last year recorded the lowest insurgency incidents and casualties among the civilians and security forces in two decades since 1997. While there is almost no insurgency left in Tripura and Mizoram, there has been a marked improvement in security situation in other States of the region. In the last four years since 2014, there has been 63% reduction in insurgency incidents in the region. Similarly, there is huge reduction of 83% in civilian deaths and 40% in SF casualties in 2017, compared to 2014.
- **Further, the lifting of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** from all areas of Meghalaya on 31st March is illustration of the vast improving security scenario in the NER. In Arunachal Pradesh also, areas under AFSPA have been reduced from 16 PS/Outposts areas bordering Assam to 8 Police Stations, besides Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts. The Centre extended ceasefire for one more year with NSCN/NK and NSCN/R wef 28th April.
- **Continuing with the North-East**, in a major breakthrough on repatriation of displaced Bru persons from Mizoram since 1997, an agreement was signed on 3rd July by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) in presence of Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, Chief Minister of Mizoram, Shri Lalthanhawla and Chief Minister of Tripura, Shri Biplab Kumar Deb.
- **The incident-free rollout of Draft National Register of Citizens (NRC)** is a significant achievement. On 25th July, MHA issued guidelines to Assam State Government and neighbouring States to ensure maintenance of law & order in the run-up to and post-publication of Draft NRC on July 30, 2018. In the run-up to Draft NRC publication in Assam, Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh issued separate statements on 22nd & 30th July assuring that every individual will get justice and will be treated in a humane manner.
- **Union Home Minister chaired the 67th Plenary Session** of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong on July 9-10, 2018. HM urged the eight member states for effective implementation of the recently approved financial package of Rs 4,500 crore by the Centre and directed them to focus on specific areas and better convergence of the govt. sponsored schemes.
- **Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas shrink, development beckons** Over the last four years, there has been a substantial improvement in the LWE scenario. Incidents of violence have seen a sharp decline while the geographical spread of LWE violence also shrunk from 76 districts in 2013 to just 58 districts. Besides, just 30 of these districts account for 90% of the LWE violence in the country. At the same time certain new districts have emerged as the focus of expansion by the Left Wing Extremists.

- **MHA undertook a comprehensive exercise** in consultation with the States to review the affected districts in order to ensure that the deployment of resources is in sync with the changed ground reality. Accordingly, 44 districts have been excluded and 08 new districts have been added to the list of Security Related Expenditure Scheme (SRE) districts.
- **The Union Home Minister** attended the passing out parade of 241 Bastariya Battalion of CRPF in Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh on 21st May. The 'Bastariya Battalion' that came into existence on 1st April 2017, has been created to enhance local representation in CRPF's combat layout in the Bastar area.
- **Internal Security: MHA** sternly deals with incidents of mob lynching, vandalism and rumour mongering over the net
- **On the Internal Security front**, MHA issued two Advisories to the States on 7th March to sternly deal with incidents of vandalism of statues in some parts of the country. Advisories were also issued to the States to deal with incidents of mob lynching. On 23rd July, Government set up a High Level Committee (HLC) chaired by the Union Home Secretary to deliberate on incidents of mob lynching; Government further decided to constitute a Group of Ministers headed by the Union Home Minister to consider the recommendations of the HLC. On 25th October, Union Home Secretary chaired a review meeting with representatives of social media platforms on steps to check rumour-mongering and sexually abusive content over the net. This has been followed up with several meetings.

Border Management: Smart border fence unveiled

- **On 17th September**, Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurated two pilot projects of smart fencing along the Indo-Pak International Border in Jammu. The smart border fencing projects built under the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) programme is the first of its kind in the country. The two projects each covering a 5.5 km border stretch along the International Border have got hi-tech surveillance system that create an invisible electronic barrier on land, water and even in air and underground and help the BSF detect and foil infiltration bids in most difficult terrains. The CIBMS is designed to guard stretches where physical surveillance is not possible either due to inhospitable terrain or riverine borders.
- **The Government on 19th January** sanctioned raising of 6 additional Battalions of BSF having total financial implication of Rs. 2,090.94 crore. All these battalions have since been raised for deployment. A proposal for raising some additional battalions in ITBP is also under consideration.
- **Newly built 6th Battalion ITBP Headquarter** of Jalalpur in Chhapra district of Bihar was inaugurated by Union Home Minister and Bihar Chief Minister Shri Nitish Kumar on 22nd April.
- **On July 12, 2018, Union Home Minister** had interaction with Field and State Level Officers implementing the Border Area Development Programme (BADP).

Modernization of Police Forces: Launch of ERSS

- **Modernization of Police Forces (MPF)** has been the topmost priority before the Government and the launch of single digit pan-India emergency phone number '112', under the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS), by the Union Home Minister in Himachal Pradesh on 28th November and in Nagaland on 1st December, marks a landmark milestone.
- **NCRB on 14th March unveiled a Mobile App template**, which is a bouquet of 9 police related services, for the citizen. These services will provide smooth interface between Citizens and Police. States/UTs upon customization can host this App on their CCTNS platform through which citizens can register Police Complaint, and can check the Status of their complaint. Another feature of the App also enables a complainant to download FIR (except those categorized as "Sensitive").
- **Women's Safety: New Division in MHA;** launch of Cyber Crime reporting portal & database of habitual sexual offenders
- **Women's Safety is a matter of concern for all** and in order to channelize Government's efforts, the MHA created a new Division in May to address issues of Women's Safety comprehensively. This Division deals with all aspects of women safety in coordination with relevant Ministries/Departments and State Governments. It was considered to create a National Mission for the Safety of Women, with participation of stakeholder Ministries/Departments, who would undertake specified actions in a time bound manner. These included setting up of Special Fast Track Courts (FTCs), strengthening of forensic set up and building up of National Registry of Sexual Offenders, appointing additional Public Prosecutors, and providing appropriate medical and rehabilitation facilities to victims.
- **On 24th October the Government** constituted a GoM headed by the Union Home Minister to strengthen legal & institutional frameworks to deal with & prevent sexual harassment at workplace.

- **On 20th September, the Home Minister** launched two separate portals to strengthen Women Safety, namely –Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal to check objectionable online content and National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) to aid in monitoring & investigation of sexual crimes. The portal “cybercrime.gov.in” receives complaints from citizens on objectionable online content related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material, sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape. The National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), which is accessible only to law enforcement agencies, assists in effectively tracking and investigating cases of sexual offences.
- **A “Handbook on legal processes for Police in respect of Crime against Children”** was earlier launched on 19th June by Union Minister of Women and Child Development (WCD), Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi at a function in New Delhi. On 10th August, Union Home Minister was the chief guest at the induction ceremony of an all-Women SWAT Team of Delhi Police.
- **Liberalization of Visa regime, e-Visa gets hugely popular** During the last one year, the MHA has taken a series of steps to liberalize the visa process in India. Some of the major steps are described below:
 - **The Electronic Visa Facility** now covers practically all the countries of the world. Foreign nationals of 166 countries can now enjoy this facility at 26 airports and 05 seaports. The foreigner does not have to interact with any Indian official till his arrival at the immigration counter. The Bureau of Immigration (BoI) generally decides within 24-48 hours whether or not to grant an e-visa to a foreigner. The popularity of e-visa is sky rocketing. The number of foreigners who visited India on e-visa has gone up from 5.17 lakhs in 2015 to 21 lakhs this year till 30th November. The number of Visas issued through e-Visa system is now approximately 40% of the total number of Visas issued and the figure is soon expected to cross the 50% mark, which is an indication of its popularity.
 - **Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh** on 13th April launched the web-based application ‘e-FRRO’ (e-Foreigners Regional Registration Office). e-FRRO module provides 27 Visa related services to foreigners. It has proved to be very successful and has obviated the need for foreigners to visit FRRO Offices for extending their stay, change of Visa status etc.
 - **With a view to promote flow of tourism and investment**, 30 islands of Andaman & Nicobar have been excluded from the RAP regime notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963. Foreigners are also allowed to visit 11 uninhabited islands, as notified by Andaman & Nicobar Islands Admn., only for day trips without any RAP. Requirement of registration by foreigners visiting these islands has also been dispensed with.
 - **On 1st June, the Union Home Minister** launched an Online Analytical Tool for effective monitoring of FCRA remittances. MHA Event Clearance & Investment Security Clearance become faster with online process
 - **The Union Home Secretary** Shri Rajiv Gauba on 2nd May launched the online Event Clearance System (<https://conference.mha.gov.in>) for grant of security clearance to the conference/seminar/workshop organized in India. This has enabled the Indian Missions abroad to issue Conference Visa for foreign nationals/delegates intending to attend such events.
 - **On 18th September Union Home Secretary** launched an online ‘e-Sahaj’ portal for grant of Security Clearance. MHA has cleared about 1,100 cases of security clearance in the past one year. Although the given timeline is 90 days, MHA strives to decide Security Clearance cases in 60 days (average time per case in 2018 is 53 days), which is being reduced further. In 2016, there were 209 cases which were over 6 months old; in 2017, this came down to 154 cases and further down to 47 cases in 2018.

International Cooperation: First India-China Agreement on bilateral Security Cooperation

- **On 22nd October**, the First India China High Level Meeting on Bilateral Security Cooperation was held in New Delhi. Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh and Mr. Zhao Kezhi, State Councillor and Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China led the respective delegations. An Agreement on Security Cooperation between the Ministry of Home Affairs of India and the Ministry of Public Security of China was also signed by the two Ministers. The Agreement further strengthens and consolidates discussions and cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, organized crimes, drug control and other such relevant areas.
- **Earlier, the Union Home Minister** co-chaired the 6th meeting of the Home Minister level talks with his Bangladesh counterpart, Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan in Dhaka on 15th July. The two Ministers also witnessed the signing of the Revised Travel Arrangement 2018 (RTA 2018) amending the earlier RTA 2013 for further liberalizing the visa regime between the two countries, including enhanced duration for employment and student visas. During his 3-day visit, Shri Rajnath Singh also called on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Ms. Sheikh Hasina.
- **On 26th October the 22nd National Level** Meeting between India & Myanmar was held in New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Rajiv Gauba, Union Home Secretary and the Myanmar delegation was led by Major General Aung Thu, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs. During the meeting both sides agreed to take action against insurgent groups operating within their territories. The two countries agreed on providing of security cooperation along with international border and facilitating movement of people and trade across the border.
- **Union Home Minister conducted a 4-day** visit to Mongolia from June 21-24, 2018. During the visit, Home Minister along with the Prime Minister of Mongolia presided over the ground-breaking ceremony of Mongolia's first petrochemical refinery project. Home Minister also visited the headquarters of the Mongolian General Authority for Border Protection (GABP) and announced GOI's decision to provide a high capacity server for the GABP's main control centre in order to assist them in more efficient border management.
- **The Union Cabinet on 7th February** approved signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC), USA and Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), India on Law Enforcement Training.

- **On 28th March, the Union Cabinet** approved signing of an MoU between India and United Kingdom and Northern Ireland regarding cooperation and Exchange of Information for the Purposes of Combating International Criminality and Tackling Serious Organised Crime.
- **Union Home Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba** co-chaired the Third Home Affairs' Dialogue between India and U.K. held in New Delhi on 30th May. Senior Officers Meeting on Homeland Security Dialogue between India and USA was held on 18th July.
- **The two-day meeting of the Joint Steering Committee** on Homeland and Public Security of India and Israel was held on February 27-28, 2018. Capacity building and modernization in the Police Forces besides border management issues were discussed.
- **A delegation from Morocco visited MHA** on 12th November and signed agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters with Indian team lead by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijju. The Union Cabinet had approved the Agreement on 1st November.
- **On 7th March, the Union Cabinet approved** an Agreement between India and France on the Prevention of the Illicit Consumption and Reduction of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Chemical Precursors, and related offences.
- **Union Home Minister inaugurated the 2-day Asia Pacific Regional Conference** of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in New Delhi on 14th March and the Valedictory Session was addressed by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijju.
- **On 6th September, the Union Home Minister** inaugurated the 3-day Defence & Homeland Security Expo and Conference- 2018 in New Delhi.

Seamless Centre-State relations: Regular Meetings of Zonal Councils conducted

- **It has been the objective** of the present Government to strengthen the institution of the Zonal Councils as well as the Inter-State Council in order to promote and maintain a good federal atmosphere of cooperation among the States and between the Centre and the States as well. As a result, during the last four years, more than 600 issues were discussed, out of which more than 400 issues resolved.
- **Standing Committee of the Inter-State Council (ISC)** headed by the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, at its meeting in New Delhi on 25th May, completed the onerous task of deliberations on all the 273 recommendations of the Punchhi Commission. Earlier, the 23rd Meeting of the Western Zonal Council was chaired by Union Home Minister at Ahmedabad on 26th April. The 28th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council was held under the Chairmanship the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh in Bengaluru on 18th September. Out of the 27 items discussed, 22 were resolved in the meeting. On 1st October, the Union Home Minister chaired the 23rd meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council in Kolkata, where 30 issues on agenda were discussed and 26 resolved.
- **Disaster Management gets more funds** from Centre: Gol enhances its contribution to SDRF from 75 to 90%; 4 new NDRF Battalions approved
- **Disaster Management during natural** or manmade calamity is another major responsibility the MHA has been tasked with. On 27th September, Government of India took an important decision to enhance its contribution in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) from 75% to 90%. w.e.f. 1st April 2018. Central Government will contribute 90 per cent and all States will contribute 10 per cent to the SDRF.
- **On 9th August, the Union Cabinet** chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the raising of four additional Battalions of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at an estimated cost of Rs 637 crore. These four battalions will initially be raised as two battalions in ITBP and one battalion each in BSF and Assam Rifles. Later these four battalions will be converted into NDRF battalions. Based on the vulnerability profile, these four battalions will be placed in J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi NCR. At present there are 12 Battalions in NDRF which are deployed strategically across the country to provide immediate response.
- **The Vice-President laid the Foundation** Stone of Southern Campus building of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) on 22nd May in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.
- **The Task Force constituted by the MHA** presented its report on "Establishing a Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)" to the Union Home Minister on 2nd May. MHA and ISRO signed an MoU on 20th September for setting up of a state-of-the-art Integrated Control Room for Emergency Response (ICR-ER). It will cater to the requirement of Disaster Management as well as Internal Security.
- **During the July-August floods in Kerala** in two spells, Cabinet Secretary chaired six meetings of NCMC in as many days during August to review the flood situation in the state. Centre launched massive rescue and relief operations. In one of the largest rescue operations, 40 helicopters, 31 aircraft, 182 teams for rescue, 18 Medical Teams of Defence forces, 58 teams of NDRF, 7 companies of CAPFs were pressed into service along with over 500 boats and necessary rescue equipments. They successfully saved over 60,000 human lives by rescuing them from marooned areas and shifting them to relief camps. Defence aircrafts and helicopters made 1,084 sorties of duration 1,168 flying hours and airlifted 1,286 tonne of load and carried 3,332 rescuers.
- **On 21st July, a Central Team led by MoS (Home)** Shri Kiren Rijju reviewed the flood situation in Kerala, followed by a visit of the Union Home Minister to the flood affected areas of Kerala on 12th August. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi monitored the rescue & relief efforts on a daily basis and he visited the State on August 17-18, 2018.

- **The Centre also provided urgent aid and relief** material to Kerala in a timely manner and without any reservation. Central assistance of Rs.500 crore, as announced by the Prime Minister, and Rs.100 crore, announced by the Union Home Minister, for flood affected Kerala was released to the Government of Kerala on 21st August. This was in addition to Rs.562.45 crore already made available in SDRF of the State. Later, High Level Committee (HLC) meeting held on 6th December under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister approved the additional assistance from National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) of Rs 3,048.39 crore to Kerala.
- **On 4th August, MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijiju** visited flood affected areas in Nagaland.
- **NCMC also met under chair of Cabinet Secretary** on 10th October to take stock of preparatory measures in the wake of impending landfall of the cyclonic storm "TITLI" along the coast between Orissa and north Andhra Pradesh.
- **On 26th February, the Union Home Minister** chaired a meeting of the HLC, approving assistance of Rs 1711.66 crore in respect of state of Bihar. The HLC also approved assistance from NDRF amounting to Rs 1055.05 crore for the state of Gujarat, Rs 169.63 crore for the state for Kerala, Rs 420.57 crore for the state of Rajasthan, Rs 133.05 crore for the state of Tamil Nadu, Rs 420.69 crore for the state of Uttar Pradesh, Rs 838.85 crore for West Bengal, Rs 395.91 crore for Chhattisgarh and Rs 836.09 crore for the state of Madhya Pradesh.
- **HLC on 14th May approved Central assistance** of Rs 1,161.17 crores to states of Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Rajasthan and UT of Lakshadweep. HLC in its meeting on 29th June approved additional Central Assistance to the flood/drought hit States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. On 12th September, HLC and approved additional assistance from NDRF of Rs 157.23 crore for the state of Uttar Pradesh (affected by rabi drought during 2017-18) and Rs 60.76 crore for the state of Maharashtra (affected by pest attack & cyclone during 2017).
- **On 31st October, Union Home Minister** approved release of 2nd installment of Central Share of SDRF amounting to Rs. 229.05 crore, in advance for the year 2018-19, to help Andhra Pradesh in providing relief measures to the people affected by the 11th October severe cyclonic storm Titli. On 19th November, HLC approved the additional assistance from NDRF of Rs. 546.21 crore to Karnataka. On 30th November, the Union Home Minister approved to release the 2nd installment of Central Share of SDRF amounting to Rs. 353.70 crore, for the year 2018-19, as an interim relief to help Tamil Nadu in providing relief measures to the people affected by cyclone Gaja. HLC meeting held on 6th December approved additional assistance from NDRF to Kerala, besides Rs. 131.16 crore to Nagaland and Rs 539.52 crore to Andhra Pradesh.
- **Coinciding with the Police Commemoration Day**, on 21st October, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, speaking on the occasion, announced an award in the name of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, to honour those involved in disaster response operations. The award would be announced every year, recognizing the bravery and courage displayed in saving lives of people, in the wake of a disaster.
- **On 12th January, the two-day International Workshop** on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDR) was inaugurated by the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, in New Delhi; the Valedictory Session was addressed by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijiju. The Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, Dr. Rajiv Kumar inaugurated the First India-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi on 19th March, while Shri Kiren Rijiju addressed the Valedictory Session. Shri Kiren Rijiju led a high level delegation to participate in Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), 2018 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 03-06 July, 2018.

Padma Awards: Record nominations as top Civilian Honours become People's Awards

- **A record number of 49,992 nominations** for the Padma Awards-2019 have been received which is 32 times higher over the nominations received in 2010. As against 1,313 nominations received in 2010, 18,768 were received in the year 2016 and 35,595 nominations in 2017.
- **The Government has transformed the Padma Awards** into a 'People's Awards' in a true sense. People are encouraged to nominate unsung heroes who deserve these top Civilian awards (Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri).
- **The nomination process for Padma Awards** was made online in the year 2016; and a simple, accessible and secure online platform was put in place to encourage citizens to participate in large numbers.
- **The technological intervention that has made** the nomination process accessible to the people at large and the emphasis of the Government to confer Padma Awards upon unsung heroes, who are doing selfless service to the nation, have resulted in a transformation.

New Police Medals instituted

- **In order to recognize the gallant efforts** of the CAPF personnel and encourage high standards of professionalism, the MHA announced on 28th June the institution of five Police Medals.

- - **the Home Minister's Special Operation Medal**, Antarik Suraksha Medal, Asadharan Aashuchan Padak, and Utkrisht & Ati-Utkrisht Seva Medal to promote professionalism and excellence in service and give recognition to those security personnel doing good work in stressful environment and in difficult areas.
- **Earlier in March, the Government** instituted the "Union Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Police Investigation" to promote high professional standards of Investigation of Crime in the State/UT Police and Central Investigating Agencies in the country.
- **Officers from the rank of Sub-Inspector** to Superintendent of Police are eligible. Based on the average crime data for the last three years, a total of 162 medals will be awarded every year; of these, 137 will be for the States/UTs and 25 for the Central Investigating Agencies. The names of awardees will be declared on 15th August every year.

National Police Memorial dedicated to the Nation

- **The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi**, dedicated the National Police Memorial to the nation, on Police Commemoration Day, in New Delhi on 21st October. The memorial has been erected on 6.12 acres of land in Chanakyapuri, at the northern end of Shanti Path. The National Police Memorial consists of Central Sculpture, a Wall of Valour-engraved with the names of police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty and a State of Art Museum dedicated to the memory of the martyred police personnel.
- **This Police Memorial** represents all State/UT Police Forces and Central Police Organizations of the country. Since 1947, 34,844 police personnel have been martyred, with 424 losing their lives this year.

Launch of Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme

- **In a novel initiative**, the Union Home Minister launched the Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme for nationwide implementation at a ceremony in Gurugram, Haryana on 21st July. The SPC programme focuses on students of Classes 8 & 9 and special care has been taken to ensure that it does not lead to increase in the workload of the students.
- **Career enhancement and welfare measures for CAPF jawans** The Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, on 10th January, approved the Cadre review of Group 'A' Executive Cadre of CISF. It provides for creation of 25 posts of various ranks from Assistant Commandant to Additional Director General ranks to enhance the supervisory staff in Senior Duty posts of CISF.
- **Union Home Minister** attended a ceremony in New Delhi on 20th January to raise funds for the "Bharat ke Veer" fund to assist the families of martyrs of the Central Armed Police Forces. Continuing with his practice over the years, Union Home Minister celebrated the New Year 2018 with ITBP Jawans in Uttarakhand.

Miscellaneous: Special Remission to Prisoners; helmet relief for Sikh women in Chandigarh

- **The Union Cabinet** chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 18th July gave its approval to grant Special Remission to Prisoners as part of Commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Elder convicts, physically challenged, terminally ill and prisoners who have completed two-third (66%) of their actual sentence period, barring certain categories involving heinous crimes, are eligible for remission to be granted in three phases.
- **Union Home Ministry** on 11th October advised the Chandigarh Administration to follow the notification issued by Delhi Government giving an exemption to Sikh women from wearing protective headgear (helmet) while driving two wheelers in UT Chandigarh.

Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019

- **About Kumbh Mela:** The Kumbh Mela (the festival of the sacred pitcher) is anchored in Hindu mythology. It is the largest public gathering and collective act of faith, anywhere in the world. The Mela draws tens of millions of pilgrims over the course of approximately 55 auspicious days to bathe at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mystical Sarasvati. Primarily, this congregation includes Ascetics, Saints, Sadhus, Sadhvis, Kalpvasis, and Pilgrims from all walks of life.
- **Celebration:** Kumbh Mela is a religious pilgrimage that is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years. The geographical location of Kumbh Mela spans over four locations in India and the Mela site keeps rotating between one of the four pilgrimage places on four sacred rivers as listed below.
- **Haridwar on the Ganges in Uttarakhand.** Ujjain on the Shipra in Madhya Pradesh. Nashik on the Godavari in Maharashtra. Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Selection of site:** Each site's celebration is based on a distinct set of astrological positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Jupiter. The celebrations occur at the exact moment when these positions are fully occupied, as it is considered to be the holiest time in Hinduism.

Mount Soputan, Pacific ring of fire

- **Background:** Indonesia sit along the Ring of Fire region, an area where most of the world's volcanic eruptions occur. The Ring of Fire has seen a large amount of activity in recent days, but Indonesia has been hit hard due to its position on a large grid of tectonic plates.
- **Vulnerable:** Indonesia is at the meeting point of three major continental plates – the Pacific, the Eurasian and the Indo-Australian plates – and the much smaller Philippine plate. As a result, several volcanoes on the Indonesian islands are prone to erupting, with Bali's Mt Agung taking the headlines last year and in 2018. Indonesia is home to roughly 400 volcanoes, out of which 127 are currently active, accounting for about a third of the world's active volcanoes.
- **What is the Ring of Fire?** The Ring of Fire is a Pacific region home to over 450 volcanoes, including three of the world's four most active volcanoes – Mount St. Helens in the USA, Mount Fuji in Japan and Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines. It is also sometimes called the circum-Pacific belt.
- **Around 90% of the world's earthquakes** occur in the Ring of Fire, and 80% of the world's largest earthquakes. The 40,000 kilometre horse-shoe-shaped ring loops from New Zealand to Chile, passing through the coasts of Asia and the Americas on the way.
- **Location:** It stretches along the Pacific Ocean coastlines, where the Pacific Plate grinds against other, smaller tectonic plates that form the Earth's crust – such as the Philippine Sea plate and the Cocos and Nazca Plates that line the edge of the Pacific Ocean.
- **Risk:** The people most at risk from activity in the Ring of Fire are in the US west coast, Chile, Japan and island nations including the Solomon Islands. These areas are most at risk because they lie on so-called subduction zones – which are boundaries that mark the collision between two of the planet's tectonic plates.
- **How was the Ring of Fire formed?** The Ring of Fire is the result from subduction of oceanic tectonic plates beneath lighter continental plates. The area where these tectonic plates meet is called a subduction zone.
- **Why does the Ring of Fire trigger earthquakes?** The world's deepest earthquakes happen in subduction zone areas as tectonic plates scrape against each other – and the Ring of Fire has the world's biggest concentration of subduction zones.
- **As energy is released** from the earth's molten core, it forces tectonic plates to move and they crash up against each other, causing friction. The friction causes a build-up of energy and when this energy is finally released it causes an earthquake. If this happens at sea it can cause devastating tsunamis.
- **Tectonic plates usually** only move on average a few centimetres each year, but when an earthquake strikes, they speed up massively and can move at several metres per second.

Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution

- **Emphasising the need** to decentralise power, KCR has said- The autonomy of states should increase. The Concurrent List should be weakened. There should be a clear division. Subjects which are under the Centre must be transferred to the state.

- **What is the Concurrent List?** The Constitution of India has provided for a division of powers between the Central and state governments. Under the Seventh Schedule, there are three lists – the Union, State and Concurrent.
- **The Union List** has a range of subjects under which the Parliament may make laws. This includes defence, foreign affairs, railways, banking, among others. The State List lists subjects under which the legislature of a state may make laws. Public order, police, public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries, betting and gambling are some of the subjects that come under the state.
- **The Concurrent List** includes subjects that give powers to both the Centre and state governments. Subjects like Education including technical education, medical education and universities, population control and family planning, criminal law, prevention of cruelty to animals, protection of wildlife and animals, forests etc. However, given that there can be conflict when it comes to laws passed by Parliament and state legislatures on the same subject, the Constitution provides for a central law to override a state law.
- **Debate over Centralisation of power:** Since 1950, the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution has seen a number of amendments. The Union List and Concurrent List have grown while subjects under the State List have gradually reduced.
- **The 42nd Amendment Act** was perhaps one of the most controversial. Effected in 1976 during the Emergency by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the amendment restructured the Seventh Schedule ensuring that State List subjects like education, forest, protection of wild animals and birds, administration of justice, and weights and measurements were transferred to the Concurrent List.
- **Former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister** CN Annadurai was one of the first to advocate for state autonomy and federalism at the Centre. "It will be sufficient if the Centre retains only such powers as are necessary for preserving the unity and integrity of the country, leaving adequate powers to the states," he said in 1967.
- **Taking his idea forward**, the Tamil Nadu government under M Karunanidhi constituted the PV Rajamannar Committee to look into Centre-State relations. While the Committee submitted its reports in 1971, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution three years later demanding that the Centre accept the state's views on state autonomy and the recommendations of the Rajamannar Committee. The Rajamannar Committee spurred other states to voice their opposition to the Centre's encroachment on subjects that were historically under the state's purview.
- **PM Indira Gandhi** had constituted the Sarkaria Commission to look into Centre-State relations. However, the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission were not implemented by successive central governments.

Asbestos in Baby Powder

- **What is talc, and why is asbestos relevant?** Talc is a mineral in clay mined from underground deposits. It's the softest mineral known to man and that makes it useful in a wide range of consumer and industrial products.
- **Asbestos** is also found underground, and veins of it can often be found in talc deposits, leading to a risk of cross-contamination, geologists say.
- **About Asbestos:** Asbestos is a set of six naturally occurring silicate minerals, which all have in common their eponymous asbestiform habit: i.e., long (roughly 1:20 aspect ratio), thin fibrous crystals, with each visible fiber composed of millions of microscopic "fibrils" that can be released by abrasion and other processes.
- **They are commonly** known by their colors, as blue asbestos, brown asbestos, white asbestos, and green asbestos.
- **Uses and applications:** Manufacturers and builders use asbestos for its desirable physical properties. Some of those properties are sound absorption, average tensile strength, affordability, and resistance to fire, heat, and electricity. It was used in such applications as electrical insulation for hotplate wiring and in building insulation.
- **When asbestos** is used for its resistance to fire or heat, the fibers are often mixed with cement or woven into fabric or mats. These desirable properties led to asbestos being used very widely.
- **Health effects:** Inhalation of asbestos fibers can cause serious and fatal illnesses including lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis (a type of pneumoconiosis).

Outcomes of COP24 in Poland

- **What was agreed at COP24?** Countries settled on most of the tricky elements of the “rulebook” for putting the 2015 Paris agreement into practice. This includes how governments will measure, report on and verify their emissions-cutting efforts, a key element because it ensures all countries are held to proper standards and will find it harder to wriggle out of their commitments. This global deal is meant for climate actions by all the countries across the globe post-2020.
- **What it contains?** The Katowice package includes guidelines that will operationalize the transparency framework. It sets out how countries will provide information about their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that describe their domestic climate actions. This information includes mitigation and adaptation measures as well as details of financial support for climate action in developing countries.
- **Besides transparency framework,** the Katowice package also includes guidelines that relate to the process for establishing new targets on finance from 2025 onwards to follow-on from the current target of mobilizing \$100 billion per year from 2020 to support developing countries.
- **It also includes** how to conduct the Global Stocktake (GST) of the effectiveness of climate action in 2023 and how to assess progress on the development and transfer of technology.
- **Significance of the rulebook:** The global rules are important to ensure that each tonne of emissions released into the atmosphere is accounted for. In this way, progress towards the emission limitation goals of the Paris Agreement can be accurately measured. Currently, climate actions of rich nations for pre-2020 period are being guided by the Kyoto Protocol.
- **Why did it take so long?** There was a row over carbon credits, which are awarded to countries for their emissions-cutting efforts and their carbon sinks, such as forests, which absorb carbon. These credits count towards countries’ emissions-cutting targets. Brazil, which hopes to benefit from its large rainforest cover, insisted on a new form of wording that critics said would allow double counting of credits, undermining the integrity of the system. This issue has been put off until next year.
- **What wasn’t agreed?** Largely absent from these talks, which had a technical focus, was the key question of how countries will step up their targets on cutting emissions. On current targets, the world is set for 3C of warming from pre-industrial levels, which scientists say would be disastrous, resulting in droughts, floods, sea level rises and the decline of agricultural productivity.
- **When will that be agreed?** The key deadline is 2020, when countries must show they have met targets set a decade ago for cutting their emissions, and when they must affirm new, much tougher targets.
- **What does the science say?** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global body of the world’s leading climate scientists, warned two months ago that allowing warming to reach 1.5C above pre-industrial levels would have grave consequences, including the die-off of coral reefs and devastation of many species.
- **How long have we got?** If we extrapolate from the IPCC’s findings, the world has little more than a decade to bring emissions under control and halve them, which would help to stabilise the climate.
- **Are we getting there?** After years in which the world’s carbon emissions appeared to be stabilising, they are on the rise again. Coal use continues and oil is still the engine of much of the world’s economy. Clean energy is coming on-stream at a faster rate than many predicted, and the costs of it have come down rapidly, but its adoption needs to be speeded up.
- **Infrastructure,** such as energy generation plants, transport networks and buildings, is a central issue: infrastructure built now to rely on high-carbon energy effectively locks in high emissions for decades to come. Some people are also saying we need to invest in projects to remove carbon from the atmosphere.
- **What happens next?** The UN will meet again next year in Chile to thrash out the final elements of the Paris rulebook and begin work on future emissions targets. But the crunch conference will come in 2020, when countries must meet the deadline for their current emissions commitments and produce new targets for 2030 and beyond that go further towards meeting scientific advice.
- **That conference** may be held in the UK or Italy, both of which have bid to be hosts. The UK’s intention in offering to host is to signal it will retain its role on the world stage after Brexit. The event may also provide a welcome change from wranglings over Brexit and intractable trade deals.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools

- **In the context** of establishing quality residential schools for the promotion of education, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) for ST students are set up in States/UTs with provisioning of funds through “Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution”.
- **The establishing of EMRSs** is based on demand of the concerned States/UTs with availability of land as an essential attribute. As per the budget 2018-19, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons will have an Eklavya Model Residential School by 2022.
- **Background: What is Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)?** EMRS is a Government of India scheme for model residential school for Indian tribals (Scheduled Tribes, ST) across India.

- **Objectives of EMRS:** Comprehensive physical, mental and socially relevant development of all students enrolled in each and every EMRS. Students will be empowered to be change agent, beginning in their school, in their homes, in their village and finally in a larger context.
- **Focus differentially** on the educational support to be made available to those in Standards XI and XII, and those in standards VI to X, so that their distinctive needs can be met, Support the annual running expenses in a manner that offers reasonable remuneration to the staff and upkeep of the facilities. Support the construction of infrastructure that provides education, physical, environmental and cultural needs of student life.

IMPRESS scheme has been launched to promote Social Science Research in the country

- **The Government** has approved "Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education by 2022", accordingly the scope of institutions to be funded through Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has been enlarged to encompass School Education and Medical Education institutions, apart from Higher Education.
- **The Government of India**, in August 2018, had sanctioned the scheme "Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)" at a total cost of Rs. 414 Cr for implementation up to 31.03.2021.
- **Highlights of the Scheme:** 1500 research projects will be awarded for 2 years to support the social science research in the higher educational and to enable research to guide policy making.
- **Implementing Agency:** Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR)
- **Objectives of the Scheme:** To identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society. To ensure selection of projects through a transparent, competitive process on online mode. To provide opportunity for social science researchers in any institution in the country, including all Universities (Centre and State), private institutions with 12(B) status conferred by UGC. ICSSR funded/recognized research institutes will also be eligible to submit research proposals on the given themes and sub-themes.
- **About ICSSR –** Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established in the year of 1969 by the Government of India to promote research in social sciences in the country.
- **About HEFA –** Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is a joint venture of MHRD Government of India and Canara Bank with an agreed equity participation in the ratio of 91% and 9% respectively. It is for financing creation of capital assets in premier educational institutions in India as part of rising 2022. HEFA's scope is greatly expanded to cover school education, educational institutes under Ministry of Health, etc.
- **HEFA is registered** under Section 8 [Not-for-Profit] under the Companies Act 2013 as a Union Govt company and as Non-deposit taking NBFC (NBFC-ND-Type II) with RBI.

10 monuments adopted under the 'Adopt A Heritage' project

- **The 'Adopt A Heritage:** Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan', scheme launched on 27th September, 2017.
- **It is a collaborative** effort by Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), State/UTs Governments and envisages development and maintenance of tourist amenities at heritage sites and making them tourist friendly, to enhance tourism potential and cultural importance in a planned and phased manner.
- **Aim of the Project:** The aim of the project is to provide basic amenities that include cleanliness, public conveniences, safe drinking water, ease of access for tourists, signages, illumination, Wi-fi etc.
- **Funding of the Project:** The project envisages involvement of Private/Public Companies/Organizations and Individuals to adopt Monuments, Natural Heritage Sites and other Tourist Sites, primarily under CSR. No fund is given by Ministry of Tourism.
- **Other Information:** Archaeological Survey of India has identified 100 monuments as "Adarsh Smarak" for upgradation of existing facilities/amenities like Wi-Fi, cafeteria, interpretation centre, brail signage, modern toilets etc.

- **Background:** Archaeological Survey of India – Founder: Alexander Cunningham The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- **Prime Objective of ASI:** The prime objective is maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
- **It regulates** all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 along with the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.

Georgia's first female president sworn in:

- **Context:** Salome Zurbishvili is Georgia's first female president. With this, the country has transformed itself into a parliamentary republic with a largely ceremonial president.
- **About Georgia:** It is a country in the Caucasus region of Eurasia. Located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe, it is bounded to the west by the Black Sea, to the north by Russia, to the south by Turkey and Armenia, and to the southeast by Azerbaijan.



Year End Review-2018: Department of Food & Public Distribution Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

- **Following are the major highlights** of the activities of the Department of Food & Public Distribution during the year 2018:
- **Implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA)** Persistent efforts has resulted in universal implementation of the NFSA, 2013 in all 36 States & UTs, benefitting 80.72 crore persons in the country by providing them access to highly subsidized foodgrains at Rs.1/2/3 per kg. for coarse grains/wheat/rice respectively.
- **The prices of foodgrains specified under NFSA – Rs.3 per kg** for rice, Rs.2 per kg for wheat and Re.1 per kg for coarse grains were initially valid for a period of three years from the coming into force of the NFSA. These rates were extended from time to time upto June, 2018. These have been further extended upto June, 2019.
- **During the Financial Year 2018-19 (upto 05.12.2018)**, Rs. 2575 crore has been released to State Governments as Central assistance to meet the expenditure incurred on intra-State movement & handling of foodgrains and fair price shop dealers' margins. Such an arrangement has been made for the first time under NFSA. Under erstwhile TPDS, State Governments were required to either meet this expenditure on their own or pass it on to beneficiaries (other than AAY beneficiaries).

End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations

- **End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations** As an outcome of digitization of Ration Card/beneficiary records, de-duplication due to Aadhaar seeding, transfer/migration/deaths, change in economic status of beneficiaries, and during the run-up to and implementation of NFSA, a total of 2.75 Crore ration cards have been deleted/cancelled by State/UT Governments during the years 2013 to 2017 (up to November 2017). Based on this the Government has been able to achieve an estimated 'Rightful Targeting of Food Subsidies' of about Rs. 17,500 Crore per annum.
- **To modernize and to bring about transparency** in the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Department is implementing scheme on End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations at a total cost of 884 Crore on cost-sharing basis with the States/UTs. The Scheme provides for digitization of ration cards & beneficiary records, computerization of supply chain management, setting up of transparency portals and grievance redressal mechanisms.
- **To identify and weed-out duplicate/ineligible** beneficiaries, and to enable rightful targeting of food subsidies, seeding of Aadhaar numbers of beneficiaries with their Ration Cards is being done by States and UTs. Presently, 85.61% of all ration cards have been seeded.
- **As part of the scheme, electronic Point of Sale (ePoS)** devices are being installed at Fair Price Shops (FPSs) for distribution of foodgrains through authentication and electronic record-keeping of the sale transactions. As on date, 3.61 lakh FPSs out of total 5.34 lakh FPSs have ePoS devices in 29 States/UTs.
- **Intra state portability of ration cards:** Facility enabling PDS beneficiaries to lift their entitled foodgrains from any fair price shop in the State has been started fully in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tripura, Kerala and partially in Madhya Pradesh.
- **'Integrated Management of PDS' (IM-PDS):** A new Central Sector Scheme has been approved to be implemented during FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 for establishing Public Distribution System Network (PDSN) to implement national level portability, central data repository and central monitoring system of PDS operations.
- **Launch of ePoS transactions portal:** Annavitran Portal (www.annavitran.nic.in) has been implemented to display electronic transactions made through ePoS devices for distribution of subsidized foodgrains to beneficiaries. This portal also shows all India picture of Aadhaar authentication of beneficiaries besides allocated and distributed quantity of foodgrains up to district level.

Supporting the Farmer

- **Supporting the Farmer** During KMS 2017-18, a record quantity of 381.84 Lakh MT paddy (in terms of rice) was procured. In 2016-17 KMS it was 381.07 LMT. During RMS 2018-19, a quantity of 357.95 lakh MT of wheat was procured which is highest in last five years. In RMS 2017-18 this was 308.24 LMT.
- **Improving Foodgrain Management About 40 million tonnes** of food grains are transported by FCI across the country in a year. Movement of food grain is undertaken by rail, road, sea, coastal and riverine systems. In 2017-18, FCI has moved 134 container rakes against the target of 100 leading to approx. freight savings of Rs. 662 lakhs. During 2018-19, 77 rakes have been moved (as on 15.10.2018) which led to approx. freight savings of Rs. 352 lakhs.
- **Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)** The process of registration of warehouses with WDRA has been simplified. The new rules will promote increase in the number of warehouses registered with WDRA. This would enhance facility of pledge finance for the farmers through Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWR) system. During the year Rs. 51.45 crore loans have been availed against NWRs upto 31.10.2018.
- **Electronic Negotiable Warehousing Receipt (eNWR) System and WDRA Portal** has been launched to transform the process of registration of warehouses online and to issue e-NWR instead of paper-NWR which will be a more credible financing tool.

Sugar Sector

- **Due to surplus sugar production** and depressed ex-mill prices of sugar the liquidity position of sugar mills was adversely affected leading to accumulation of cane price dues which reached to an alarming level of about Rs.23,232 crores in the last week of May, 2018. With a view to improve the liquidity position of sugar mills enabling them to clear cane price arrears of farmers, the Government has taken the following measures during last few months:-
- **In order to prevent cash loss** and to facilitate sugar mills to clear cane dues of farmers in time, the Government has fixed a minimum selling price of sugar at Rs.29/kg for sale at factory gate in domestic market, below which no sugar mill can sell sugar.
- **Extending Assistance to sugar mills** @Rs.5.50/quintal of cane crushed for sugar season 2017-18 to offset the cost of cane amounting to about Rs.1540 crore; Created buffer stock of 30 LMT in sugar season 2017-18 for which Government will reimburse carrying cost of Rs.1175 crore towards maintenance of buffer stock;
- **Extending soft loans of Rs. 6139 crore** through banks to the mills for setting up new distilleries and installation of incineration boilers to augment ethanol production capacity for which Government will bear interest subvention of Rs. 1332 crore;
- **Extending Assistance to sugar mills** @Rs.13.88/quintal of cane crushed for sugar season 2018-19 to offset the cost of cane amounting to about Rs.4163 crore; Extending Assistance to sugar mills for defraying expenditure towards internal transport, freight, handling and other charges to facilitate export of sugar from the country in sugar season 2018-19 amounting to about Rs. 1375 crore.
- **Government has also notified** new National Policy on Bio-Fuels, 2018 under which sugarcane juice has been allowed for production of ethanol. Further, the Government has fixed remunerative price of ethanol produced from C-Heavy molasses and B-Heavy molasses/sugarcane juice separately for supply under EBP during ethanol season 2018-19.
- **As a result of above measures**, all India cane price arrears of farmers have also come down to Rs. 5465 crore from the peak arrears of about Rs. 23232 crore on State Advised Price (SAP) basis for sugar season 2017-18. On FRP basis, all India cane price arrears of farmers have come down to Rs. 1924 crore from the peak arrears of about Rs. 14538 crore.

Reusable Rocket Technology

- **ISRO is working on reusable technology** for reducing the cost of access to space including the development of a winged body unmanned reusable launch vehicle for launching payloads into low earth orbits.
- **ISRO has successfully developed a scaled down (1:5) technology demonstration version of Reusable Launch Vehicle – Technology Demonstrator (RLV-TD) vehicle** and successfully carried out the first experimental mission on May 23, 2016 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. In this mission, critical technologies such as autonomous navigation, guidance & control and reusable thermal protection system have been successfully demonstrated.

- **Development of Reusable Launch Vehicles** is a technical challenge and it involves the development of many cutting edge technologies. A series of technology demonstration missions would be required to validate these technologies. In the next phase, an autonomous runway landing experiment is planned releasing the RLV-TD vehicle from a helicopter to demonstrate the runway approach and landing capability. This will be followed by an end-to-end orbital re-entry mission demonstration using a Technology Demonstration Vehicle boosted by propulsion systems.
- **ISRO has undertaken** the development & qualification of Semi-Cryogenic engine. Further development activities are planned to realise a Semi-cryogenic stage and updated version of the high thrust GSLV Mk III cryogenic stage, in order to increase the payload capacity of GSLV Mk III from 4 tonnes to 6.5 tonnes.

E-Drishti Software

- An **'e-Drishti' interface** has been unveiled for the Union Railway Minister, Minister of State and Board Members. This software includes an interface which provides summary information on punctuality of trains for the previous day. There is also an interface which provides information on current train running on the Indian Railway network. In addition, there are interfaces providing details of freight earning, freight loading and passenger earnings for the previous day & month and cumulative for the year, in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year.
- **Punctuality of passenger** carrying trains is being also monitored rigorously to improve punctuality performance on a daily basis at Divisional, Zonal and Railway Board levels by Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs), General Managers (GMs) and Railway Board Members and senior officers.
- **To ensure** running of trains right time when pairing trains are running late, scratch rakes are inducted and rakes are standardized to the extent operationally feasible. Also various steps have been initiated to improve punctuality such as prioritization of preventive maintenance of assets to minimize asset failures, capacity enhancement projects by construction of additional loop lines at stations, doubling, construction of third line corridors, automatic signalling, construction of limited height subways to replace level crossings, Road Under Bridges (RUB) and Road Over Bridges (ROB) etc.
- **Besides**, punctuality drives are launched from time to time and staff involved in train operations is sensitized. In addition, Zonal Railways have also been advised to have better coordination with Civil and Police authorities of states to deal with situations arising out of law and order problems.

Gender gap index 2018

- **About Global gender gap report:** It is published annually by the world economic forum since 2006. Global gender gap index is a part of this which measures gender equality across four pillars– they are economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health and survival.
- **Performance of various countries:** Iceland has been ranked as Number 1. It is followed by Norway, Sweden and Finland. Other countries in top 10 include Nicaragua, Rwanda, New Zealand, Philippines, Ireland and Namibia.
- **As per the report**, at the current speed it will take about 108 years to close the overall gender gap in the world. And after 202 years there will be parity in the workplace in the world at the current rate of change. Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and finally Yemen showed the biggest overall gender gaps of the countries surveyed.
- **Performance of India:** India has been ranked at 108. It has recorded improvement in wage equality for similar work and has fully closed its tertiary education gender gap for the first time. It ranks 142nd out of 149 countries in the economic opportunity and participation subindex. India continues to rank third-lowest in the world on health and survival, remaining the world's least-improved country on this subindex over the past decade.
- **India has slightly** improved in WEF's wage equality for similar work indicator, where it stood at 72nd place. The country has also closed its tertiary education enrolment gap for the first time in 2018 and has managed to keep its primary and secondary gaps closed for the third year running. Interestingly, India has the second-largest artificial intelligence (AI) workforce but one of the largest AI gender gaps, with only 22% of roles filled by women.
- **Way ahead for India:** India needs to get more women into senior and professional roles to make more improvement in the rankings.

Transgender Rights Bill

- **Background:** The Bill had gone to the standing committee, and as many as 27 amendments have been accepted by the government.
- **New definition:** The amendments passed include a change in the previous definition of transgender persons as “neither wholly female or wholly male”, which was criticised as being insensitive.
- **According to the new definition,** a transgender person is somebody “whose gender does not match the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-men or trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons having socio-cultural identities such as kinnar, hijras, aravani, and jogta”.
- **Highlights of the Bill:** The Bill aims to stop discrimination against a transgender person in various sectors such as education, employment, and healthcare. It also directs the central and state governments to provide welfare schemes for them. The Bill states that a person will be recognised as transgender on the basis of a certificate of identity issued through the district screening committee. This certificate will be a proof of identity as transgender and confer rights under this Bill.
- **Criticisms:** Several civil society groups have been vocal about their opposition to the Bill. The Bill disregards many of their suggestions as also some of the crucial points raised by the standing committee report of July 2017.
- **This includes** the right of transgender persons to self-identification, instead of being certified by a district screening committee. The panel had also pointed out that the Bill is silent on granting reservations to transgender persons. The bill has prescribed punishments for organised begging. However, the Bill doesn't provide anything to better to condition in those areas, it doesn't provide for reservation. The Transgender Bill does not mention any punishments for rape or sexual assault of transgender persons as according to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, rape is only when a man forcefully enters a woman.
- **Need of the hour:** The Bill must recognise that gender identity must go beyond biological; gender identity is an individual's deep and personal experience. It need not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. It includes the personal sense of the body and other expressions such as one's own personal inducing proceeds.

Draft National Child Protection Policy

- **Background:** The Supreme Court had asked the centre to consider framing the national policy on protection of children.
- **Key provisions and highlights of the draft policy:** Application of the policy: The policy will apply to all Institutions and organisations including corporate and media houses government or private sector. As per the policy all organisations must have a code of conduct based on zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation.
- **The policy** requires organisations to lay down that employees don't use language or behaviour that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate. Institutions should also designate a staff member to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure the protection of children as well as to report any abuse.
- **Any individual** who suspects physical, sexual or emotional abuse must report it to the helpline number 1098 or police or a child welfare committee.
- **What is missing?** Unlike the national child policy 2013, the latest draft doesn't talk about children who may need additional Special Protection measures. Left out: It also doesn't include provisions for protecting those affected by migration, communal or sectarian violence or children forced into begging or who are in conflict with the law and those infected with HIV/AIDS. The draft talks about organisations laying a code of conduct, but it doesn't explain what is acceptable behavior such as conduct of teachers in schools.
- **What else is needed?** The Policy should address four aspects- creating awareness, prevention, reporting and responding. The draft needs to go into all these aspects, especially reporting structure involving various nodal bodies and monitoring mechanism for implementation of the guidelines.
- **The policy makers** should take the opportunity to go beyond the role of Institutions and look at the role of individuals. The norms should be designed in such a way that organisations can customise the policies according to the nature of their work.

Graphene

- **As of now,** researchers have achieved 88% yield of graphene from a single graphite rod. It can be scaled up to the industrial level.

- **Significance:** Since graphene is made out of graphite, its production is both expensive and has significant environmental impact. The new technique helps both reduce the cost and preserve environment.
- **About Graphene:** Graphene has been touted in the global electronics industry as a “miracle material” given its strength, electrical conductivity and elasticity, and has been seen as an alternative to lithium-ion batteries since its discovery in 2004. It is a form of carbon that can be used to develop smaller, slimmer batteries but with higher capacity.
- **Graphene is a carbon material** that is one atom thick. Its thin composition and high conductivity means it is used in applications ranging from miniaturised electronics to biomedical devices. These properties also enable thinner wire connections; providing extensive benefits for computers, solar panels, batteries, sensors and other devices.
- **Applications:** Graphene is widely used in making solar cells, light-emitting diodes, touch panels and smart windows. Graphene supercapacitors serve as energy storage devices with a capacity for faster charging and longer life span than traditional electrolytic batteries.
- **Other potential applications** of graphene include water filtration and purification, renewable energy, sensors, personalised healthcare and medicine, to name a few.

Indian Forest Act 1927

- **Expected outcomes:** The process would involve the examination of all the sections of the Act. The obsolete provisions will be weeded out and provisions fit for the present will be introduced.
- **Currently there is no definition** of forest in any Indian law pertaining to forest or its governance. Therefore, the amendments will also include definitions of terms like forests, pollution, ecological services etc.
- **The legal definition** of forests will have huge ramifications on the conservation of forests as well as the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. The amendments will include changes to punishments and fines prescribed in the IFA, incorporate provisions related to carbon sequestering, ecological services etc.
- **The current practice:** According to the 1996 Supreme Court order, the dictionary definition of the word forest is taken to be the legal definition too. It covers all statutorily recognised forests, whether designated as reserved, protected or otherwise for the purpose of Section 2(i) of the Forest Conservation Act (1980). As per the Court order, the term forest land, occurring in Section 2, will not only include forest as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the government record irrespective of the ownership.
- **Indian Forest Act, 1927:** The Indian Forest Act, 1927 was largely based on previous Indian Forest Acts implemented under the British. The most famous one was the Indian Forest Act of 1878.
- **Both the 1878 act** and the 1927 one sought to consolidate and reserve the areas having forest cover, or significant wildlife, to regulate movement and transit of forest produce, and duty leviable on timber and other forest produce.
- **It also defines** the procedure to be followed for declaring an area to be a Reserved Forest, a Protected Forest or a Village Forest. It defines what a forest offence is, what are the acts prohibited inside a Reserved Forest, and penalties leviable on violation of the provisions of the Act.
- **The need for review:** Many reports like the MB Shah report of 2010 and the TSR Subramanian report of 2015, have talked about amending the IFA.

Navic powered gadgets to TamilNadu fishermen

- **Significance:** These gadgets will help the Tamilnadu fishermen know about cyclones and provide weather updates on a real-time basis. These gadgets are basically receivers which will produce a beep when alerts are received by the device. They are Bluetooth enabled and the alerts received can be read on the Navic app.
- **What is NAVIC?** NAVIC is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1500 km around the Indian mainland.

- **Services provided:** IRNSS would provide two types of services, namely Standard Positioning Services available to all users and Restricted Services provided to authorised users.
- **Its applications include:** Terrestrial, Aerial and Marine Navigation. Disaster Management. Vehicle tracking and fleet management. Integration with mobile phones. Precise Timing. Mapping and Geodetic data capture. Terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travelers. Visual and voice navigation for drivers.
- **How many satellites does NAVIC consist of?** It is a regional system and so its constellation will consist of seven satellites. Three of these will be geostationary over the Indian Ocean, i.e., they will appear to be stationary in the sky over the region, and four will be geosynchronous – appearing at the same point in the sky at the same time every day. This configuration ensures each satellite is being tracked by at least one of fourteen ground stations at any given point of time, with a high chance of most of them being visible from any point in India.
- **Why it is necessary to have indigenous global navigation system?** Having a global navigation system bolsters the ability of a nation to serve as a net security provider, especially through the guarantee of such assurance policies. It can also play a significant role in relief efforts post disasters such as the tsunami in the Indian Ocean region in 2004 and the Pakistan-India earthquake in 2005.

7th round of India – South Korea negotiations held

- **The 7th round of India – South Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations** were held in South Korea from 11th to 13th December, 2018.
- **Highlights of the Meeting:** The discussions were positive, and subject to Indian sugar industry meeting the quality standards and specifications prescribed by the South Korean Government.
- **Background:** South Korea imports around 15 lac tones of raw sugar annually and the Indian sugar industry is making efforts to export raw sugar from India during 2018-19 sugar seasons. India and South Korea will reduce duties on 11 tariff lines in a bid to expand bilateral trade by updating their existing free-trade agreement, called the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- **In 2017-18,** India exported goods worth \$4.4 billion to South Korea while imports from the latter were worth \$16.3 billion.
- **Difference between CECA and CEPA –** CECA – Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement CEPA – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement The major “technical” difference between a CECA and CEPA is that CECA involve only “tariff reduction/elimination in a phased manner on listed/all items except the negative list and tariff rate quota (TRQ) items. CEPA also covers the trade in services and investment and other areas of economic partnership”.
- **So CEPA is a wider term than CECA and has the widest coverage.** Usually CECA is signed first with a country and after that negotiations may start for a CEPA.

National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Project

- **Minister of State** for Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, gave details on the status of implementation of National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Project.
- **e-Vidhan:** It is a Mission Mode Project (MMP) comes under the Digital India Programme. Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) is the ‘Nodal Ministry’ for its implementation in all the 31 States/UTs with Legislatures. The funding for e-Vidhan is provided by the MoPA and technical support by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MietY). The funding of NeVA is through Central Sponsored Scheme i.e. 60:40; and 90:10 for North East & hilly States and 100% for UTs.
- **Aim of NeVA:** It aims to bring all the legislatures of the country together, in one platform thereby creating a massive data depository without having the complexity of multiple applications.
- **Highlights of NeVA:** Paperless Assembly or e-Assembly is a concept involving of electronic means to facilitate the work of Assembly. It enables automation of entire law making process, tracking of decisions and documents, sharing of information. Through the cloud technology (Meghraj), data deployed can be accessed anywhere at any time.

- **The live webcasting** of Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV is also available on this application. Doordarshan has already been enabled with provision to incorporate similar facility in respect of State Legislatures. Himachal Pradesh is already the first Digital Legislature of the country.
- **Central Project Monitoring Unit (CPMU) and Detailed Project Report (DPR):** The CPMU under MoPA, is responsible for reviewing the financial and technical progress of the project. The State will prepare detailed project report (DPR) and gap analysis report.
- **State level project** monitoring committee will carry out the technical scrutiny and financial scrutiny of the DPR and after final approval of the same will be send to the MoPA for approval. After the technical and financial scrutiny, funds will be released for project implementation.
- **State Government's Role in the implementation of e-Vidhan:** The State Government will appoint a Secretary level officer to be designated as the nodal officer/representative for e-Vidhan implementation in the State Legislature(s).
- **State Government** will bear the funds required for running of e-Vidhan MMP after 3 years. The State Government will ensure capacity building for the effective implementation of e-Vidhan MMP module. State Government/Legislature will undertake maintenance and replacement of ICT equipment after 3 years.
- **Release of next instalment** would not be made in case the utilization certificate and confirmation of release of funds by the state government of their share is not received by the CPMU.

'Farout' Dwarf Planet:

- **What is it?** It is the most-distant body ever observed in our solar system discovered recently. It is located over 100 times farther than Earth is from the Sun.
- **It has been given** the provisional designation 2018 VG18. It is at about 120 astronomical units (AU), where 1 AU is defined as the distance between the Earth and the Sun.
- **The discovery images** of 2018 VG18 were taken at the Japanese Subaru 8-metre telescope located atop Mauna Kea in Hawaii on November 10, 2018. 2018 VG18 was seen for the second time in early December at the Magellan telescope at Carnegie's Las Campanas Observatory in Chile.
- **The second-most-distant** observed solar system object is Eris, at about 96 AU. Pluto is currently at about 34 AU, making 2018 VG18 more than three-and-a-half times more distant than the solar system's most-famous dwarf planet.

Shiksha Setu:

- **What is it?** **Shiksha Setu is a mobile application launched by Haryana Government.** Aim: To bring in Transparency in the education department and in the administration of colleges and to increase the connectivity between students, parents, teachers and administration.
- **Key features of the app:** The app contains all the information related to attendance, fee online admission and scholarships in all the Haryana Government colleges. The details of lecturers of Government colleges and offices of the directorate can be accessed through the mobile app.
- **App will provide** the students with instant information about assignments and updates of important notices circulars and other programs. The app also provides facility of online fee payment.

National cancer Institute:

- **Context:** National Cancer institute has been opened at Jhajjar in Haryana. The institute has been established under a project of Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).



Year End Review - 2018: Department of Science and Technology

- India is one of the top-ranking** countries in the field of basic research. The year 2018 saw Indian Science getting further recognized as one of the most powerful instruments of growth and development, especially in the emerging scenario and competitive economy. Department of Science & Technology (DST) established in May 1971, with the objective of promoting new areas of Science & Technology plays the role of a nodal department for organizing, coordinating and promoting S&T activities in the country. Some of the Key highlights, initiatives and achievements of the Department in the year 2018 are as follows:
- One of the biggest developments** of the year came in the month of December as the Union Cabinet gave its approval to the launch of National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) to be implemented by Department of Science & Technology at a total outlay of Rs. 3660 crore for a period of five years. The Mission addresses the ever increasing technological requirements of the society, and takes into account the international trends and road maps of leading countries for the next generation technologies.
- November saw the launch of The Global Cooling Prize**, an innovation challenge that aims to spur development of a residential cooling solution that has at least five times (5x) less climate impact than today's standard products. This technology could prevent up to 100 gigatons (GT) of CO₂-equivalent emissions by 2050. Over US\$3 million will be awarded in prize money after the 2-year competition. As part of its Act East policy, the 1st ASEAN-India InnoTech Summit was hosted by India in New Delhi during 29-30 November 2018. The main objective of the InnoTech Summit was to exhibit and build networks between Indian and ASEAN researchers, scientists, Innovators, Technocrats, private companies and Start-ups etc to facilitate building an ASEAN-India Innovation and Technology Databank for sharing among India and ASEAN country stakeholders. An Inter-Ministerial / Departmental meeting was held on 6 November 2018 in under the Chairmanship of Secretary, DST to discuss harmonization of guidelines on emoluments and other service conditions of research personnel (JRF/SRF/RA) in R&D programmes of Central Government Departments and Agencies. The Inter-Ministerial Group recommended upward revision of fellowship with certain modification in the eligibility criterion.
- Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Science Technology & Innovation** between the Government of India and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan was concluded in the month of October. The DST-CII Technology Summit was held in New Delhi during October 29-30, 2018 with Italy as partner country.
- To combat vehicular pollution WAYU (Wind Augmentation and purify Ying Unit)** was inaugurated in September by Union Science & Technology Minister at ITO intersection and Mukarba Chowk in New Delhi. WAYU helps in reducing ambient air pollution levels ejected by vehicles at places, which have high concentration of pollutants. WAYU can reduce PM10, PM2.5, CO, VOCs, HC emitted in the atmosphere. The cost of device is Rs.60, 000 per device with a maintenance cost of Rs.1500 per month. September also witnessed The Make Tomorrow for Innovation Generation, a PPP Initiative between Department of Science & Technology, Intel Technologies and Indo-US S&T Forum. The programme encouraged the school children of the age group of 14-17 to make innovative prototypes using the kits given to them.
- In July, a major partnership** was announced between Indian Government and Republic of Korea in terms of establishment of Indo-Korean Center for Research and Innovation (IKCRI) in India, which will act as the hub for systematic operation and management of all cooperative programmes in research and innovation between the two countries including innovation & entrepreneurship and technology transfer.
- Thirty young meritorious Indian scholars** in the field of physiology and medicine and allied areas participated in the 68th Nobel Laureates meeting held in Lindau, Germany during 24-29 June 2018. The Indian team of students also visited various research institutes/universities in Germany during 02-06 July 2018 in the exposure visit jointly supported by DST and German Research Foundation. June also saw the Department deputed 27 young Indian Scientist / Innovators for participation in 3rd BRICS Scientist Conclave which was held in Durban (South Africa) during 25-29 June 2018. The Conclave covered 3 themes namely Energy, Water and Use of ICT for Societal applications. The Conclave also organized BRICS Young Innovators Award competition. One Indian innovator aged 23 years was awarded the "BRICS most promising Innovator" during the Conclave.
- Mission Innovation Ministerial meeting** during the month of May at Denmark and Sweden saw signing of bilateral Science, Technology Innovation Agreement. May 2018 also witnessed completion of 10 years of Indo-Dutch Science, Technology and Innovation cooperation.
- A major event in April was the India – UK Science & Innovation Policy Dialogue** wherein it was agreed to scale up collaboration to tackle global challenges realizing the potential of artificial intelligence (AI), digital economy, health technologies, cyber security and promoting clean growth, smart urbanisation, future mobility, environment (removal of plastic and micro-plastics from land and ocean), fight against climate change and participation in International Solar Alliance (ISA). This came in as a follow up of the two Prime Ministers statement that technology partnership is central to their vision of India-UK collaboration and their desire to raise it to £ 400 million by 2021.
- The month of March witnessed The President of India**, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurating the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE) and presenting the Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

- **The month of January saw Department of Science and Technology** and the National Technological Innovation Authority of Israel jointly establishing a US\$ 40m "India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4 Fund)" for a period of five years. This fund will extend support to joint R&D projects aimed to co-develop innovative technology-driven products, services or processes that have potential for commercialization. The Fund will provide opportunity for techno-economic cooperation between India and Israel by extending institutional support in building up consortia including private industry, enterprises and R&D institutions.
- **The beginning of 2018 also saw the launch of three Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)'s Schemes** by Union Science & Technology Minister viz.
- **Teacher Associate ship for Research Excellence (TARE):** The Scheme aims to tap the latent potential of faculty working in state universities, colleges and private academic institutions who are well trained but have difficulty in pursuing their research due to varied reasons including lack of facilities, funding and guidance. This scheme facilitates mobility of such faculty members to carryout research in a well-established public funded institution such as IITs, IISc, IISERS and other National Institutions (NITs, CSIR, ICAR, ICMR labs, etc) and Central Universities located preferably nearer to the institution where the faculty member is working. Up to 500 TAs will be supported under this scheme.
- **Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship (OVDF):** This scheme offers opportunities for up to 100 PhD students admitted in the Indian institutions for gaining exposure and training in overseas universities / institutions of repute and areas of importance to country for period up to 12 months during their doctoral research.
- **SERB Distinguished Investigator Award (DIA):** DIA has been initiated to recognize and reward Principal Investigators (PIs) of SERB/DST projects who have performed remarkably well. The scheme aims not only to reward the best PIs of completed projects but also to motivate the ongoing PIs to perform exceedingly well. DIA is a one-time career award devised to specifically cater to the younger scientists who have not received any other prestigious awards or fellowships.
- **Some other major initiatives of the year** were the inauguration of India's first supercritical Brayton Cycle CO2 test facility at IISc Bangalore, which has the potential to pave the way for highly efficient compact power plants driven by wide range of heat sources including Solar; Organization of Children's Science Congress all over the country on the Focal Theme of "Science Technology and Innovation for Clean, Green and Healthy Nation".
- **Communicating science also got a major fillip** in the Launch of Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research (AWSAR), a new initiative that aims to communicate and disseminate Indian research stories among masses in a format that is easy to understand and interesting for a common person.
- **A Draft Policy Document Scientific Research Infrastructure and Maintenance Networks (SRIMAN)** in the S&T sector has already been framed and the year 2019 looks all set to see an accelerated impetus towards fulfillment of the mandate of Department of Science & Technology in terms of formulation of policies, promotion of new areas of S&T with special emphasis on emerging areas, integration of areas of S&T having cross-sectoral linkages, application of S&T for weaker sections, women and other disadvantaged sections of Society and others.

SVEP

- **Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)**, the sub-scheme under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has the objective of helping rural households including women to set-up enterprises.
- **The scheme was approved during 2015-16** and the enterprise formation started in 2017-18. As on 30th November 2018, a total of 30,352 enterprises were formed across 20 States where the scheme is operational. The details of enterprise formed during the last two years is given as Annexure-I.
- **Skill building support is provided to all** the entrepreneurs supported under Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme through Community Resource Persons for Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EP).
- **SVEP process mandates the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR)** for each block. The DPR provides estimates of the potential of enterprises in various sectors in the block. The entrepreneurs have the freedom to identify the sectors in which they want to start businesses based on assessment of market potential.
- **The details of the major ten types of enterprises** selected by the entrepreneurs under the scheme in manufacturing, trading and services sector are given as Annexure-II.
- **The total SVEP proposals approved till 30th November 2018** is 131. Of these Kudumbashree NRO, Kerala is supporting implementation of 69 projects, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) NRO, Ahmedabad is supporting implementation of 42 projects and other Project Implementing Agencies (PIA) are supporting implementation of 20 projects.

Commemorative Postage Stamp on Rajkumar Shukla

- **Background:** Department of Posts has been paying a tribute to eminent personalities who have made a significant contribution to public life especially freedom fighters. With this stamp, the Department has released 43 issues in the current calendar year.
- **Who was Rajkumar Shukla?** In drawing the attention of Mahatma Gandhi to the plight of peasants suffering under an oppressive system established by European indigo planters in Champaran, Bihar, Rajkumar Shukla made a seminal contribution culminating in the launch of the Champaran Satyagraha in 1917 by Mahatma Gandhi.
- **About the Champaran Satyagraha:** It was undertaken in the erstwhile undivided Champaran district in northern Bihar. Mahatma Gandhi went there in April, 1917 on learning about the abuses suffered by the cultivators of the district, forced into growing indigo by British planters/estate owners.
- **Gandhi was so thoroughly persuaded by Rajkumar Shukla**, an indigo cultivator from Champaran that he decided to investigate into the matter. Gandhi's method of inquiry at Champaran was based on surveys by the volunteers. The respondents who willingly gave statements should sign the papers or give thumb impressions.
- **For those unwilling to participate**, the reasons must be recorded by the volunteers. The principal volunteers in this survey were mostly lawyers like Babu Rajendra Prasad, Dharnidhar Prasad, Gorakh Prasad, Ramnawami Prasad, Sambhusaran and Anugraha Narain Sinha.
- **Outcomes: In June 1917, the British administration** declared the formation of a formal inquiry committee with Gandhi aboard. The Government accepted almost all its recommendations. The principal recommendation accepted was complete abolition of Tinkathia system. It was a major blow to the British planters who became resentful. But they could not prevent the passage of Champaran Agrarian Act in Bihar & Orissa Legislative Council on March 4, 1918.
- **It was in Champaran that Gandhi first met J. B. Kripalani** and Rajendra Prasad; and it was through his work in Champaran that Gandhi attracted the attention (and admiration) of Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai.

Goa Liberation Day

- **About Operation Vijay:** Portuguese were the first ones to colonize parts of India and were the last to leave. The Portuguese invaded Goa in the year 1510.
- **Operation Vijay** began on December 17, 1961, when the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru ordered the invasion. With a force of almost 30,000, the Indian attack overpowered the ill-prepared Portuguese 3,000 member army. With minimal blood shed, the attack was successful and was carried forward to retrieve the other Portuguese-controlled areas, Daman and Diu.
- **At this point on December 18**, the Portuguese Governor General Vassalo da Silva gave up control of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu. Three days after the attack began, Goa finally became a part of India.
- **Referendum and Statehood:** The Goa Opinion Poll was a referendum held in the state of Goa, India, on 16 January 1967, to decide the future of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu within the Indian Union. Although popularly called an opinion poll, it was in fact, a referendum, as the results of the poll were binding on the government of India. The referendum offered the people of Goa a choice between continuing as a union territory or merging with the state of Maharashtra. It is the only referendum to have been held in independent India. The people of Goa voted against the merger and Goa continued to be a union territory. Subsequently, in 1987, Goa became a full-fledged state within the Indian Union.

Winter solstice 2018

- **What is Winter Solstice?** The winter solstice happens every year when the Sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees. In other words, it is when the North Pole is tilted farthest away from the Sun, delivering the fewest hours of sunlight of the year.
- **The Sun is directly** overhead of the Tropic of Capricorn in the Southern Hemisphere during the December solstice and is closer to the horizon than at any other time in the year. The day after the winter solstice marks the beginning of lengthening days, leading up to the summer solstice in June. In the Southern Hemisphere, the opposite is true. Dawn comes early, and dusk comes late. The sun is high and the shortest noontime shadow of the year happens there. In the Southern Hemisphere, people will experience their longest day and shortest night.

- **Does the winter solstice always occur on December 21st?** While it more often than not falls on December 21st, the exact time of the solstice varies each year. In the Northern hemisphere the winter solstice is the shortest day of the year, because it is tilted away from the sun, and receives the least amount of sunlight on that day.
- **However, the earliest sunset** does not occur on the solstice, because of the slight discrepancy between 'solar time' and the clocks we use. The shortest day of the year often falls on December 21st, but the modern calendar of 365 days a year – with an extra day every four years – does not correspond exactly to the solar year of 365.2422 days. The solstice can happen on December 20, 21, 22 or 23, though December 20 or 23 solstices are rare. The last December 23 solstice was in 1903 and will not happen again until 2303.
- **What does 'solstice' mean?** The term 'solstice' derives from the Latin word 'solstitium', meaning 'Sun standing still'. On this day the Sun seems to stand still at the Tropic of Capricorn and then reverses its direction as it reaches its southernmost position as seen from the Earth. Some prefer the more teutonic term 'sunturn' to describe the event.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

- **What's the issue?** The United States first alleged in its July 2014 Compliance Report that Russia is in violation of its INF Treaty obligations "not to possess, produce, or flight-test" a ground-launched cruise missile having a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers or "to possess or produce launchers of such missiles."
- **Subsequent State Department** assessments in 2015, 2016, and 2017 repeated these allegations. Russia denies that it is in violation of the agreement. On December 8, 2017, the Trump administration released a strategy to counter alleged Russian violations of the Treaty.
- **About the Intermediate- Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty:** The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.
- **The treaty marked** the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and utilize extensive on-site inspections for verification. As a result of the INF Treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.
- **Despite its name**, the INF Treaty covers all types of ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles — whether their payload is conventional or nuclear. Moscow and Washington are prohibited from deploying these missiles anywhere in the world, not just in Europe. However, the treaty applies only to ground-launched systems. Both sides are free to deploy air- and sea-launched missiles within the 500-to-5,500-kilometer range.
- **What are the diplomatic implications of withdrawal?** Withdrawal is likely to be controversial with U.S. allies in NATO, further splitting the alliance at a difficult time for transatlantic relations. Many Western European NATO states favor retaining the INF, in conjunction with previous U.S. policy designed to push Moscow back into compliance. This raises concerns that divisions within NATO may worsen when the United States officially withdraws from the INF.
- **Trump's move** is also likely to undermine the 2010 New START treaty governing U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear systems. The INF Treaty's demise will undercut New START by reopening questions on the relationship between intermediate and strategic systems that have been resolved for 30 years by the elimination of ground-based, intermediate-range missiles.

New peace agreement on Yemen

- **The agreement** includes the future deployment of UN-supervised neutral forces and the establishment of humanitarian corridors. Troops from both sides will withdraw from the entire Hodeidah area within a maximum of 21 days in a process overseen by a UN-chaired committee.
- **What next?** A political framework for Yemen will be discussed in a next round of meetings, scheduled for late January. If implemented on the ground, the deal would represent a breakthrough because the port is the gateway for the bulk of humanitarian aid coming into the country, and has been the subject of intense fighting. Ceasefires have also been agreed at two other ports, Salif and Ras Issa.
- **What triggered the truce?** The ceasefire between Yemen's Houthi rebels and forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi in the port city of Hodeida came into existence on December 18. The agreement was reached in UN-mediated talks held in Stockholm earlier this month. At the time of the negotiations, the city was almost in the hands of the Saudi-led coalition. The coalition had blockaded the port, the main conduit for humanitarian aid to enter Yemen, for months, and the fighters, mostly UAE soldiers, were battling the rebels.

- **But Saudi Arabia** came under increased global pressure to stop fighting in Yemen after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside its consulate in Istanbul triggered a global outcry. The spotlight on Yemen and its deteriorating humanitarian situation has been so strong after the Khashoggi affair that even the U.S., which supports Riyadh in the war, cut down its involvement by ending refuelling of coalition aircraft. With the UN also pushing for talks, the Yemeni government backed by Saudi Arabia gave the green light for talks.
- **How bad is Yemen's humanitarian situation?** Since the Saudi intervention in 2015, at least 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen, according to the WHO. The widespread damage caused to infrastructure by the coalition airstrikes and lack of supplies of food and medicines due to the blockade have pushed Yemen into a humanitarian catastrophe. About 12 million people are at the risk of starvation if aid doesn't reach them fast. The country has also seen a massive cholera outbreak. A child dies every 10 minutes in Yemen from preventable causes, says UNICEF.
- **Why is Saudi Arabia in Yemen?** Saudi Arabia interfered in Yemen after the Shia Houthi rebels captured Sana'a, the capital city, and the internationally recognised government of President Hadi moved to the country's south. The Saudis accuse Iran of bankrolling the Houthis and "destabilising" the Arabian Peninsula.
- **The Saudi plan** was to expel the Houthis from Sana'a and restore the authority of the government. But almost four years since they launched the attack, the Houthis still control Sana'a and much of the north of Yemen. They also fire short-range missiles across the border into Saudi Arabia, which has become a major security concern for Riyadh.

GSAT-7A

- **About GSAT-7A:** GSAT-7A has been placed in the geostationary orbit and this communication satellite is expected to help the IAF to interlink different ground radar stations, airbases and AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control System) aircraft. The idea is to improve the IAF's network-centric warfare capabilities.
- **It is an advanced** communication satellite with a Gregorian Antenna and many other new technologies. It is the heaviest satellite being launched by GSLV with an indigenously developed cryogenic stage. The GSAT-7A is expected to have the Ku-band transponders and two deployable solar arrays onboard.
- **It is the 39th Indian communication** satellite of ISRO to provide services to the users in Ku-band over the Indian region. The GSAT-7A is also expected to be a big push for drone operations as it will help the Navy reduce the reliance on on-ground control stations and take satellite-control of military unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) which should help boost the range and endurance of the UAVs.
- **The satellite, being dubbed** as 'angry bird' by some, is likely to enhance the range of communication and also aid in aircraft to aircraft communication. In addition to GSAT-7A, the IAF would also be getting the GSAT-7C in a few years, to boost the network-centric operations.
- **Background- GSAT 7 series:** The GSAT 7 series was launched in 2013 as a dedicated communications satellite for the Indian Navy, which made the Navy completely independent of relying on foreign satellites for its blue water capabilities, thanks to GSAT 7 having a 2,000 nautical mile footprint. This helps in providing real-time inputs to Indian warships, submarines and maritime aircraft.
- **GSLV:** The GSLV is ISRO's fourth generation launch vehicle that has three stages. The four liquid strap-ons and a solid rocket motor at the core constitute the first stage. The second stage is equipped with a high thrust engine that uses liquid fuel. The cryogenic upper stage forms the third and final stage of the vehicle. The GSLV-F11 was the seventh flight carrying indigenously developed cryogenic upper stage.

NASA's 1st flight to moon, Apollo 8, marks 50th anniversary

- **About the Apollo 8 Mission:** Apollo 8, the second manned spaceflight mission in the United States Apollo space program, was launched on December 21, 1968, and became the first manned spacecraft to leave low Earth orbit, reach the Moon, orbit it, and safely return.
- **The three-astronaut crew**—Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders—became the first humans to travel beyond low Earth orbit, see Earth as a whole planet, and enter the gravity well of another celestial body. They were also the first humans to orbit another celestial body, see the far side of the Moon, witness and photograph an "Earthrise", escape the gravity of another celestial body (the Moon), and reenter Earth's gravitational well.

Ministry of Rural Development Signs MoU with Maruti Suzuki India Ltd for Training Rural Youth for Skill Development Under Deendayal upadhyaya grameen kaushalya yojana (Ddu-Gky)

- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya** Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) is the flagship placement linked skill-training programme under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
- **There are several challenges** that are preventing India's rural poor from competing such as the lack of formal education and employability skills. DDU-GKY bridges this gap by funding training projects with an emphasis on placement, retention, career progression and foreign placement. The mission of the flagship scheme of MoRD is to ensure rural poor youth are skilled in market relevant trades and job-relevant competencies.
- **Champion Employers policy:** The Champion Employers are the industry leaders who have the potential to provide training and captive employment to the DDU-GKY candidates. The policy seeks a strategic alignment of objectives of DDU-GKY with the HR strategy of organizations, which have a large potential to absorb trained manpower.
- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY):** The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) announced the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) Antyodaya Diwas, on 25th September 2014.
- **DDU-GKY** is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
- **DDU-GKY is uniquely** focused on rural youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years from poor families. As a part of the Skill India campaign, it plays an instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs of the government like the Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Start-Up India, Stand-Up India campaigns.



Year End Review 2018- Department of Youth Affairs (Ministry Of Youth Affairs & Sports)

- **The Youth which represents the most vibrant** and dynamic segment of the population has been given a new hope through Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK) of the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports during the year. Series of initiatives taken by the Deptt. of Youth Affairs have resulted in greater participation of youth in the Nation Building. Restructuring of the Schemes of the Department of Youth Affairs
- **The Schemes of the Department** have been consolidated and restructured into 3 compact schemes, w.e.f. 01.04.2016, as follows: 1. Eight Schemes are merged into a new 'umbrella' Scheme called "Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)". 2. National Service Scheme (NSS) 3. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) The major achievements under the above Schemes/ Sub-Schemes during 2018-19 are given below.
- **1. Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)** A. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS): NYKS, with about 36.22 lakh youth enrolled through 1.68 lakh youth clubs, has been working all over the Country to develop the personality of the youth and to engage them in nation-building activities.
- **Some significant initiatives/ achievements of NYKS during the year are as follows:** 8.47 lakh saplings were planted by NYKS volunteers. 13,432 units of blood was donated by NYKS volunteers.
- **1,764 education in basic vocations and soft skills programmes were organised, involving 51,508 youth.** 1694 Youth Club Development Programmes were organised, involving 83,514 youth. 1336 Sports Meets at Block level were organised, involving 1,77,688 youth. 8126 Programmes were held to celebrate days of national and international significance, involving 11,05,136 youth. 230 District Youth Conventions were organised, involving 1,84,5024 youth. International Day of Yoga on 21st June 2018 was observed by NYKS at 38,356 locations across India by involving 23.68 lakh youth.
- **Swachhta Programme** was conducted at 1,15,437 locations involving 12,07,686 youth for cleaning of 8,577 Schools / colleges, 7,797 Hospitals and 21,905 statues.
- **Water Conservation** - 13,757 awareness creation programmes were conducted by involving 3.9 lakh youth; 2430 new water bodies were created and 3437 water sources were maintained.
- **Inderdhanush Programme** - in which 59,961 children were immunized with the help of service providers. National Unity Day and Run for Unity Programme was conducted by district Nehru Yuva Kendras in India wherein 2.6 lakh youth were involved.
- **Swachta Hi Sewa Campaign** in East Champaran - Swachta Hi Sewa Campaign was launched by district Nehru Yuva Kendra, East Champaran (Bihar) from 14th September to 25th September, 2018 in which more than 300 youth participated. Different types of activities such as Cleaning of Moti Jheel, Cleanliness drive to clean streets, Railway Station and common places.
- **Clean Ganga** - NYKS is working with National Mission for Clean Ganga to spread awareness for cleanliness & sanitation in villages along Ganga River. Ganga Vriksharopan Saptah (Plantation Week) was carried out in 53 selected blocks of 4 States of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. 82,819 sapling were planted in collaboration with Forest Department and National Mission for Clean Ganga from 9th July to 15th July 2018.
- **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat** is being organized Inter State Youth Exchange Programme in 15 pairing States. So far, 4 such programmes have been completed in the states of Telangana, Punjab, Kerala and Chhattisgarh in which 401 youth from pairing States participated.
- **Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyan Programme** - NYKS was the major partner for implementation of Poshan Abhiyan programme across the country. Different types of activities such as Gosthi, seminars and Discussions, Lectures by Eminent Resource Persons on Focus Areas of Poshan Maah viz. pregnancy care, right age of marriage, child care, birth spacing, immunization, breast feeding upto 2yrs and complimentary feeding and Maintenance and adequate sanitation facilities in the village, etc were organized. Besides these, Door to door campaigning in the village focusing on Focus Areas of Poshan Maah, Rallies, Run, Padyatra, Cycle Yatra were organized. The efforts of Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and NYKS were appreciated at the highest level. Ministry of Women and Child Welfare awarded for the exemplary work.
- **Parakram Parv, 2018** – NYKS has organised various programmes and activities and participated in events to mark the Second Anniversary of Surgical Strikes during 28th September 2018 to 30th September 2018, organised by the Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India in various locations across the country. More than 1786 youth & officials of NYKS participated in the programme & activities across the country.
- **Health Mela**- With the support of Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Heart Care Foundation organised 25th Perfect Health Mela on 23rd October, 2018 in Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi. In this programme, 1000 youth from NYKs participated. Well known Artists, Specialists, Doctors and Social Workers were also present.

- **B. International Cooperation:** This Department seeks to operate international Youth exchange programmes with various countries to develop international perspective among the youth and also to collaborate with various international agencies on youth development. Some significant achievements during the year are as follows;
- **C. National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD):** National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD) along with other Schemes of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been merged into one 'Umbrella Scheme' called Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakarm (RYSK) for providing support to Government/ non-Government organisations for undertaking activities for development of adolescent and youth.
- **During financial year 2018-19,** financial assistance has been given to 5 Voluntary Organisations including All India Level Organisations. Youth Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas will be held on 21st January, 2019 at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. The 6th North East Youth Festival was organized at Agartala, Tripura from 15th to 18th November, 2017. This Year Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award 2017 was conferred to 10 (Ten) Awardees for adventure in Land, Water, Air and Life time Achievements.
- **2. National Service Scheme (NSS):** NSS, with about 4.13 million student youth enrolled in 42958 NSS units spread over through 451 Universities/ +2 Councils, 17996 Colleges/Technical Institutions and 12,827 Senior Secondary Schools across the country, has been working for development of personality and character of youth through voluntary community service. Some significant initiatives/ achievements of NSS during the year are as follows:
 - **NSS has been restructured** as a Central Sector Scheme w.e.f. 1.4.2016. The Scheme is now a Central Sector Scheme.
 - **NSS Volunteers** have been actively participating in Swachh Bharat Mission activities across the country. During the Swachh Bharat Pakhwada observed by the NSS Volunteers, they cleaned 2276 Hospital, 1713 Dispensary, 1665 Community Centres, 534 Old Age Homes, 554 Historical Places, 236 Orphanages, 263 Centres for Disabled, 748 Railway Stations, 3660 Bus Stops, 1339 Statues and 801 Archeological Sites and Tourist Places. Film making and Essay Competition was organized by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in collaboration with Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for NSS Volunteers.
 - **Approximately 27000 NSS volunteers** participated in 100 Hours Swachh Bharat Summer Internship Programme Organized by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
 - **On the occasion of International Day of Yoga (21.06.2018),** about 25.78 lakh NSS Volunteers participated in various yoga programmes across the country. 18,79,675 saplings were planted by NSS volunteers. 1,91,581 units of blood was donated by NSS volunteers.
 - **9402 health/eye/immunization** camps were organised, in which 464622 NSS Volunteers participated. 38,710 Awareness programmes/rallies were organised on issues of relevance to the community, in which 25.89 lakh NSS Volunteers participated.
 - **62.50 lakh volunteer-hours** of Shramadaan was undertaken by NSS volunteers during the year. 34,728 NSS Volunteers were imparted Training on Self - Defence. Awareness on GST and Digital payments were organized by NSS Units throughout the country.
- **3. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNID):** During the period, 162 training/capacity building/ workshop, conference and other programmes were organized involving 6,663 participants including NSS Officers, NYKS Officials, Faculty/ Teachers, Officials from State Govt. industries department & executives from NGOs etc.
- **Out of the above programmes,** 35 To T programmes were organized through which 1023 functionaries of NYKS and other officials of NSS were trained on themes such as Environment Education, Employability Skills, youth health, peace building, ICT based entrepreneurship for young rural women, education policies and programmes, life skills etc.

Youth Development Index:

- **RGNID recently brought out** the India Youth Development Index and Report - 2017 as part of its documentation activity of the National Youth Resource Centre. As per the mandate of the Institute to disseminate youth related information among the key stakeholders and as suggested by the Executive Council of RGNID in its recent meeting, three Regional Dissemination Workshops on India Youth Development Index – 2017 were organised for the key stakeholders in the field of Youth Development as per the details provided below:
 - **1. Northern Eastern Regional Dissemination Workshop** on India Youth Development Index – 2017 held on 20 August 2018 at the Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati
 - **2. Northern Regional Dissemination Workshop** on India Youth Development Index – 2017 held on 17 September 2018 at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi
 - **3. Dissemination Workshop on India Youth Development Index – 2017 for Southern, Eastern and Western States** held on 26 October 2018 at RGNID, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu Constituency Management System for JK-11 Sonawari Constituency, Jammu and Kashmir
- **In the Academic Programmes,** 182 Students enrolled for the Academic year 2017-18 and 2018-19 where most of the states are represented
- **B.Voc Programme** on Apparel Manufacturing and Entrepreneurship and Fashion Design and Retail started in collaboration with Apparel Training and Design Centre (ATDC), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India is being run in 19 ATDC Centres with total 663 students enrolled in these campus

Paika Rebellion

- **About Paika rebellion:** Two-hundred years ago in 1817, a valiant uprising of soldiers led by Buxi Jagabandhu (Bidyadhar Mohapatra) took place in Khurda of Odisha. This is known as Paika rebellion.
- **Reason for the revolt:** The Paikas were the traditional land-owning militia of Odisha and served as warriors. When armies of the East India Company overran most of Odisha in 1803, the Raja of Khurda lost his primacy and the power and prestige of the Paikas went on a decline. The British were not comfortable with these aggressive, warlike new subjects and set up a commission under Walter Ewer to look into the issue.
- **The commission recommended** that the hereditary rent-free lands granted to the Paikas be taken over by the British administration and this recommendation was zealously adhered to. They revolted against the British. However, the rebellion had several other underlying causes – like the rise in the price of salt, abolition of the cowrie currency for payment of taxes and an overtly extortionist land revenue policy.
- **Although initially the Company** struggled to respond they managed to put down the rebellion by May 1817. Many of the Paik leaders were hung or deported. Jagabandhu surrendered in 1825.

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

- **CDSCO has directed Drug Controllers** of all the States and Union Territories to monitor the sale, manufacture and distribution of Isotretinoin.
- **Background:** Isotretinoin is an oral drug, which is used in the treatment of severe acne. Isotretinoin capsules of 10 mg/20 mg were approved by CDSCO in 2002 for the treatment of cystic and conglobate acne, and severe nodular acne unresponsive to antibiotic therapy. It was later found that Isotretinoin can cause birth defects in progeny if not taken without proper guidance.
- **About CDSCO:** The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
- **Functions:** Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view to bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- **CDSCO along** with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

MHA authorises 10 central agencies to access any computer resource

- **Who are these agencies?** The 10 agencies include Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency Cabinet Secretariat (RAW), Directorate of Signal Intelligence (For service areas of Jammu & Kashmir, North-East and Assam only), and Commissioner of Police, Delhi.
- **Highlights of the Order:** The ministry has vested the authority on the agencies under Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and Rule 4 of the Information Technology Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009. The order mandates for a subscriber or service provider or any person in charge of the computer resource to extend technical assistance to the agencies. Non-compliance will invite seven-year imprisonment and fine.
- **Concerns raised:** Only data in motion could be intercepted earlier. But now data revived, stored and generated can also be intercepted as powers of seizure have been given. This means not just calls or emails, but any data found on a computer can be intercepted. The agencies will also have powers to seize the devices. The sweeping powers given to agencies to snoop phone calls and computers without any checks and balances is extremely worrisome. This is likely to

be misused.

Govt seeks ₹41,000 crore more for bank recapitalisation

- **Implications:** The additional capital could help as many as five such state-run banks exit the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework that mandates them to pare lending to companies and cut concentration of loans to certain sectors. Eleven banks were put under the PCA framework by the Reserve Bank of India between February 2014 and January 2018.
- **The government** had budgeted ₹65,000 crore for infusion into public sector banks (PSBs) through recapitalization bonds this fiscal, of which ₹42,000 crore is still to be allotted. With the additional ₹41,000 crore of capital infusion by 31 March, the government will be infusing a total ₹83,000 crore into public sector banks this year.
- **The capital infusion** will be utilized to ensure that the better-performing banks under the PCA framework meet their regulatory capital norms and non-PCA banks do not breach the threshold.
- **Concerns associated with recapitalization of banks:** The government as the major owner is free to recapitalise but the issue is, at what cost, for how long, and whether recapitalisation alone is enough. The government is finding it increasingly difficult to recapitalize public sector banks due to the compulsion to adhere to the stringent budgetary deficit benchmarks.
- **Bankers become lackadaisical** toward debt recovery and tend to escalate provisions and contingencies to be adjusted against the fresh capital. In different-banks-same-pay situations, employees in the loss-making, but recapitalized, banks become unenthusiastic while those in profit-making, but not recapitalized are demotivated. It also implies cross-subsidization: dividend-paying PSU banks subsidizing the non-dividend paying. Ultimately, systemic efficiency suffers.
- **Conclusion:** PSBs are in very real danger of losing not only their market share but also their identity unless the government intervenes with surgical precision and alacrity. Hence, policymakers and bankers need to put their heads together and come up with a smart option to resolve an issue that can no longer be put on the backburner.

Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)

- **What to study?** For Prelims and Mains: ATAGS- key features and significance.
- **Context:** The Army has begun finalising the Preliminary Specifications Qualitative Requirements (PSQR) of the indigenously-designed heavy artillery gun, the Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS).

NASA Confirms Saturn's Rings Will Be Gone in 100 Million Years

- **The rings** are being pulled into Saturn by gravity as a dusty rain of ice particles under the influence of Saturn's magnetic field.
- **Composition and structure:** Saturn's rings are made up of billions of particles ranging from grains of sand to mountain-size chunks. Composed predominantly of water-ice, the rings also draw in rocky meteoroids as they travel through space.
- **Though Saturn** appears surrounded by a single, solid ring when viewed by an amateur astronomer, several divisions exist. The rings are named alphabetically in the order of discovery. Thus the main rings are, from farthest from the planet to closest, A, B and C. A gap 2,920 miles wide (4,700 kilometers), known as the Cassini Division, separates the A and B rings. The rings themselves contain a number of gaps and structures. Some are created by Saturn's many small moons, while others continue to puzzle to astronomers.
- **Is it only the Saturn to have rings?** Saturn is not the only planet in the solar system to have rings — Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune also contain faint ring systems — but with its satellites spanning three-quarters of the Earth-moon distance (175,000 miles or 282,000 km), it is by far the largest and most visible.

National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)

- **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM):** The Mission envisages empowering national academic and R&D institutions spread over the country by installing a vast supercomputing grid comprising of more than 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- **These supercomputers** will also be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network (NKN). The NKN is another programme of the government which connects academic institutions and R&D labs over a high speed network.
- **The Mission** includes development of highly professional High Performance Computing (HPC) aware human resource for meeting challenges of development of these applications. India looks forward to create a cluster of machines for weather forecasting, drug discovery and data mining.
- **Agencies involved:** The Mission would be implemented and steered jointly by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) over a period of seven years. The tender to build these high performance computers (HPC) had been floated by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC). Atos would be deploying its energy efficient Direct Liquid Cooled Bull Sequana supercomputers in India.
- **Background:** World-wide supercomputing facilities have enabled countries in their S&T capabilities in areas such as designing vehicles, aeroplanes, massive structures like high rise buildings and bridges, infrastructure, discovery of new life saving drugs, discovery and extraction of new energy sources including oil, natural gas etc.
- **Over the years**, supercomputers have benefitted mankind in several ways. Weather prediction has reached accuracy of forecast as well as real time tracking of natural phenomenon. Timely warning of cyclones in the recent past have saved many lives and property. The Mission aims to further such capabilities beyond current levels.

Shram Awards:

- **Context:** The Union Government has announced to confer the Prime Minister's Shram Awards 2017 to 40 workers across country. About Shram Awards: The Prime Minister's Shram Awards were instituted in 1985 by the Government of India.
- **This national award** is conferred on workers for outstanding contributions that improve productivity, innovation, and indigenization, resulting in saving foreign exchange. The award is also given for long-term exceptional dedicated work.
- **The objective of the Prime Ministers** Shram Awards is to recognize the outstanding contributions made by workmen as defined in the Industrial Dispute Act, 1947 in organizations both in public and private sector and who have distinguished record of performance, devotion to duty of a high order, specific contribution in the field of productivity and proven innovative abilities among others.
- **There are four types of awards:** Shram Ratna: Two lakhs and recognition of their contribution to their field (a Sanad). Shram Bhushan: 100000 and a Sanad. Shram Vir / Shram Veerangana: 60000 and a Sanad. Shram Devi / Shram Shree: 40000 and a Sanad.



Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'

- **As a part of the campaign**, over 900 cultural programmes across various districts of Maharashtra, 100 programmes in Goa and 30 programmes in UT of Dadra & Nagar Haveli would be held.
- **About BBBP:** Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched in January, 2015. The scheme is aimed at promoting gender equality and the significance of educating girls. The Scheme is targeted at improving the Child Sex Ratio through multi sectoral interventions including prevention of gender biased sex selection and promoting girls' education and her holistic empowerment. It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.
- **Significance and the need for scheme:** The trend of decline in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) has been unabated since 1961. The decline from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 and further to 918 in 2011 is alarming. The social construct discrimination against girls on one hand, easy availability, affordability and subsequent misuse of diagnostic tools on the other hand, have been critical in increasing Sex Selective Elimination of girls leading to low Child Sex Ratio.
- **Child Sex Ratio** is defined as number of girls per 1000 of boys between 0-6 years of age. Hence, a decline in the CSR is a major indicator of women disempowerment. The ratio reflects both, pre-birth discrimination manifested through gender biased sex selection and post birth discrimination against girls.

SDG India Index 2018

- **Background:** The SDG India Index was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute and United Nations in India.
- **The index comprises** a composite score for each State and Union Territory based on their aggregate performance across 13 of the 17 SDGs. The score, ranging between 0 and 100, denotes the average performance of the State/UT towards achieving the 13 SDGs and their respective targets.
- **The aim of the index** is to instil competition among States to improve their performance across social indices as the States' progress will determine India's progress towards achieving the set goals by 2030. Using the index, States will be monitored on a real-time basis.
- **Significance:** The SDG India Index acts as a bridge between these mandates, aligning the SDGs with the Prime Minister's clarion call of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', which embodies the five Ps of the global SDG movement – People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnership and Peace.
- **Highlights of the report and performance of various states:** According to the SDG India Index, the nation as a whole has a score of 58, showing the country has reached a little beyond the halfway mark in meeting the sustainable development goals adopted by India and 192 other nations in 2015.
- **The SDG Index Score** for Sustainable Development Goals 2030 ranges between 42 and 69 for States and between 57 and 68 for UTs. Top 3 states in terms of being on track to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Among the UTs, Chandigarh is the front runner with a score of 68.** Tamil Nadu has a score 66, and is the top scorer on the goals to do with eradicating poverty and also providing clean and affordable energy. Kerala's top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education. Himachal Pradesh ranks high on providing clean water and sanitation, in reducing inequalities and preserving the mountain ecosystem.
- **Among the UTs**, Chandigarh takes the lead because of its exemplary performance in providing clean water and sanitation to its people. It has further made good progress towards providing affordable and clean energy, generating decent work and economic growth, and providing quality education.
- **The toppers** in gender equality, Sikkim and Union territories Andaman and Nicobar islands and Chandigarh have crossed the half way mark in reaching the goals. Jharkhand, Odisha and Nagaland are also among the states that have a lot more ground to cover in the overall rankings. Overall, the average score for the States was the worst when it came to gender equality (36), in creating sustainable cities and communities (39), in enabling industry, innovation, and infrastructure (44), and in eradicating hunger (48).

- **SDGs:** Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all member states of the United-Nations in 2015, describe a universal agenda that applies to and must be implemented by all countries. Sound metrics and data are critical for turning the SDGs into practical tools for problem solving.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

- **Implications:** Such a move would spark international criticism against Japan over whale conservation and deepen the divide between anti- and pro-whaling countries.
- **Background:** Tokyo currently observes the moratorium but exploits a loophole to kill hundreds of whales every year for “scientific purposes” as well as to sell the meat.
- **About IWC:** It is an international body set up under International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). ICRW governs the commercial, scientific, and aboriginal subsistence whaling practices of fifty-nine member nations. It was signed in Washington, D.C., United States, in 1946. Headquarters — Impington, near Cambridge, England. In 1986, it adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling. This ban still continues.
- **Whale sanctuary:** In 1994, it created the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary surrounding the continent of Antarctica. Here, the IWC has banned all types of commercial whaling. Only two such sanctuaries have been designated by IWC till date. Another is Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary by the tiny island nation of the Seychelles.
- **Objectives:** To provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks. For orderly development of the whaling industry.

States’ Start-up Ranking 2018

- **Background:** DIPP began the exercise to review the Start-up ecosystem of the states from January 2016.
- **The key objective** of the exercise was to encourage States and Union Territories to take proactive steps towards strengthening the Start-up ecosystems in their states. The entire exercise was conducted for capacity development and to further the spirit of cooperative federalism. The methodology behind the exercise was aimed at creating a healthy competition environment wherein States were encouraged further to learn, share and adopt good practices.
- **States’ Startup Ranking 2018:** Best Performer: Top Performers: Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan. Leaders: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana. Aspiring Leaders: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.
- **Emerging States:** Assam, Delhi, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. Beginners: Chandigarh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, and Tripura. Champions: 51 officers from States and Union Territories were identified as “Champions”, who have made significant contributions towards developing their State’s Start-up ecosystem.

Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS)

- **The spacecraft** used its robotic arm to place the seismometer on the ground in front of the lander, 5.4 feet (1.64 meters) away.
- **About Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure:** The seismometer, known as the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure, or SEIS, was made by the French space agency, CNES. The tool aims to help scientists better understand the interior of Earth’s neighboring planet by studying ground motion, also known as marsquakes. Main Job: To measure the pulse of Mars by studying waves created by marsquakes, thumps of meteorite impacts, and even surface vibrations generated by activity in Mars’ atmosphere and by weather phenomena such as dust storms.
- **About InSight Mission:** InSight is part of NASA’s Discovery Program, managed by the agency’s Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. It will be the first mission to peer deep beneath the Martian surface, studying the planet’s interior by measuring its heat output and listening for marsquakes, which are seismic events similar to earthquakes on Earth. It will use the seismic waves generated by marsquakes to develop a map of the planet’s deep interior.

- **Significance of the mission:** The findings of Mars' formation will help better understand how other rocky planets, including Earth, were and are created. But InSight is more than a Mars mission – it is a terrestrial planet explorer that would address one of the most fundamental issues of planetary and solar system science – understanding the processes that shaped the rocky planets of the inner solar system (including Earth) more than four billion years ago. InSight seeks to answer one of science's most fundamental questions: How did the terrestrial planets form?
- **Why Mars?** Previous missions to Mars have investigated the surface history of the Red Planet by examining features like canyons, volcanoes, rocks and soil. However, signatures of the planet's formation can only be found by sensing and studying its "vital signs" far below the surface.
- **In comparison** to the other terrestrial planets, Mars is neither too big nor too small. This means that it preserves the record of its formation and can give us insight into how the terrestrial planets formed. It is the perfect laboratory from which to study the formation and evolution of rocky planets. Scientists know that Mars has low levels of geological activity. But a lander like InSight can also reveal just how active Mars really is.

NABCB Accreditation Secures Recognition in Asia-Pacific Region

- **The National Accreditation Board** for Certification Bodies (NABCB), India's national accreditation body, has secured equivalence for its accreditation programme for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS) Certification Bodies in Asia- Pacific region.
- **It has signed** the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC) on 19 December 2018. About NABCB: NABCB can facilitate export of Indian goods in the global market by attesting that these are certified as per international standards by competent certifying bodies.
- **It is a constituent Board** of the Quality Council of India, is responsible for accreditation of certification/inspection bodies as per applicable international standards under an international system of equivalence.
- **It is the third** accreditation body in the Asia-Pacific region (other two being the accreditation bodies of Hong Kong and Mexico).
- **NABCB programme** is based on international standards, ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO 45001, applicable for OHSMS.

Cell-by-cell DNA science is 'Breakthrough of 2018':

- **Context:** The US journal Science has coined as "Breakthrough of the Year" for 2018 new technologies that reveal how DNA cues individual cells to grow through time.
- **Significance:** A combination of technologies is revealing when genes in individual cells switch on, cueing the cells to play their specialized parts. These methods will transform science over the coming decades, allowing an ever clearer picture of the processes behind aging, healing, and disease.



Buddhist site museum at Lalitgiri in Odisha

- **Located in Cuttack district**, it will be the third site museum of the Bhubaneswar circle of the Archaeological Survey of India after Ratnagiri and Konarak.
- **About Lalitgiri:** It is a major Buddhist complex in the Indian state of Odisha comprising major stupas, 'esoteric' Buddha images, and monasteries (viharas), one of the oldest sites in the region. Together with the Ratnagiri and Udayagiri sites, Lalitgiri is part of Puspagiri University located on top of hills of the same names. The three complexes are known as the "Diamond Triangle". Tantric Buddhism was practiced at this site.
- **Excavations** at Lalitgiri have yielded the remains of four monasteries, showing cultural continuity from the post-Mauryan period till the 13th century CE. The centre of attraction is a relic casket containing corporal remains found inside the Mahastupa.
- **Location:** It is hemmed between the Parabhadi and Landa sandstone hills in the standalone Assian hill range. It is situated in the Mahanga Tahsil in Cuttack district.

Public Credit Registry

- **About Public Credit Registry:** What is it? The PCR will be an extensive database of credit information for India that is accessible to all stakeholders. The idea is to capture all relevant information in one large database on the borrower and, in particular, the borrower's entire set of borrowing contracts and outcomes.
- **The proposed PCR** will also include data from entities like market regulator Sebi, the corporate affairs ministry, Goods and Service Tax Network (GSTN) and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) to enable banks and financial institutions to get a 360-degree profile of the existing as well as prospective borrowers on a real-time basis.
- **Management of PCR:** Generally, a PCR is managed by a public authority like the central bank or the banking supervisor, and reporting of loan details to the PCR by lenders and/or borrowers is mandated by law. The contractual terms and outcomes covered and the threshold above which the contracts are to be reported vary in different jurisdictions, but the idea is to capture all relevant information in one large database on the borrower, in particular, the borrower's entire set of borrowing contracts and outcomes.
- **Need for a PCR:** A central repository, which, for instance, captures and certifies the details of collaterals, can enable the writing of contracts that prevent over-pledging of collateral by a borrower. In absence of the repository, the lender may not trust its first right on the collateral and either charge a high cost on the loan or ask for more collateral than necessary to prevent being diluted by other lenders. This leads to, what in economics is termed as, pecuniary externality – in this case, a spillover of one loan contract onto outcomes and terms of other loan contracts.
- **Furthermore**, absent a public credit registry, the 'good' borrowers are disadvantaged in not being able to distinguish themselves from the rest in opaque credit markets; they could potentially be subjected to a rent being extracted from their existing lenders who enjoy an information monopoly over them. The lenders may also end up picking up fresh clients who have a history of delinquency that is unknown to all lenders and this way face greater overall credit risk.
- **Benefits of having a PCR:** A PCR can potentially help banks in credit assessment and pricing of credit as well as in making risk-based, dynamic and counter-cyclical provisioning. The PCR can also help the RBI in understanding if transmission of monetary policy is working, and if not, where are the bottlenecks.
- **Further**, it can help supervisors, regulators and banks in early intervention and effective restructuring of stressed bank credits. A PCR will also help banks and regulators as credit information is a 'public good' and its utility is to the credit market at large and to society in general.
- **Task force on PCR:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had formed a high-level task force on public credit registry (PCR) for India. The task force was chaired by Y M Deosthalee.
- **The task force** has suggested the registry should capture all loan information and borrowers be able to access their own history. Data is to be made available to stakeholders such as banks, on a need-to-know basis. Data privacy will be protected.

'Angel Tax' Controversy

- **However**, this is not the first time that this issue has come up. Startups have been raising the issue of Angel Tax for years, requesting the government to do away with it.
- **What is Angel Tax?** Angel Tax is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an external investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
- **The tax**, under section 56(2)(viib), was introduced by in 2012 to fight money laundering. The stated rationale was that bribes and commissions could be disguised as angel investments to escape taxes. But given the possibility of this section being used to harass genuine startups, it was rarely invoked.
- **Why is Angel tax problematic?** There is no definitive or objective way to measure the 'fair market value' of a startup. Investors pay a premium for the idea and the business potential at the angel funding stage. However, tax officials seem to be assessing the value of the startups based on their net asset value at one point. Several startups say that they find it difficult to justify the higher valuation to tax officials.
- **In a notification** dated May 24, 2018, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had exempted angel investors from the Angel Tax clause subject to fulfilment of certain terms and conditions, as specified by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). However, despite the exemption notification, there are a host of challenges that startups are still faced with, in order to get this exemption.

Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme

- **Key features of the scheme:** As per the scheme, an amount of Rs. 10,000 per family at the rate of Rs. 5,000 each for Kharif and Rabi seasons shall be provided as financial assistance for taking up cultivation.
- **The assistance** will be provided to take care of sustenance of farmers not able to take up cultivation due to old age, disability, disease or other reasons. The scheme also has a component for livelihood support for landless households. The landless households will have the option of selecting any of the units. The scheme, among others, will particularly benefit scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households.
- **Deserving families** will be identified and selected by gram panchayats. About 10 lakh households will be covered over two years under this scheme at a cost of Rs. 100 crore.
- **The scheme** also include life insurance cover of Rs. 2 lakh and additional personal accident cover of Rs. 2 lakh will be provided to both cultivators and landless agriculture labourers covering about 74 lakh households.
- **Significance of the scheme:** The KALIA is historic and it will further accelerate agricultural prosperity in the state and reduce poverty. It is a progressive and inclusive scheme and will make a direct attack on poverty by way of massive investment in this sector and making benefits reach the most needy through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.
- **Ten lakh landless households** will be supported with a unit cost of Rs. 12,500 to take up activities like goat rearing units, mini layer units, duckery units, fishery kits for fishermen and women, mushroom cultivation and bee keeping.

National Mathematics Day 2018

- **National Mathematics Day:** In 2011, on the 125th anniversary of his birth, the Indian Government declared that 22 December will be celebrated every year as National Mathematics Day.
- **Highlights of Srinivasa Ramanujan's life:** In 1911, Ramanujan published the first of his papers in the Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society. Ramanujan traveled to England in 1914, where Hardy tutored him and collaborated with him in some research. He worked out the Riemann series, the elliptic integrals, hypergeometric series, the functional equations of the zeta function, and his own theory of divergent series.

- **The number 1729** is known as the Hardy-Ramanujan number after a famous visit by Hardy to see Ramanujan at a hospital. Hardy observed Ramanujan's work primarily involved fields less known even amongst other pure mathematicians. Ramanujan's home state of Tamil Nadu celebrates 22 December as 'State IT Day', memorialising both the man and his achievements, as a native of Tamil Nadu.

Ultima Thule

- **Key facts- Ultima Thule:** Ultima Thule is located in the Kuiper belt in the outermost regions of the Solar System, beyond the orbit of Neptune.
- **It measures** approximately 30 km in diameter, and is irregularly shaped. Ultima Thule has a reddish color, probably caused by exposure of hydrocarbons to sunlight over billions of years.
- **Ultima Thule belongs** to a class of Kuiper belt objects called the "cold classicals", which have nearly circular orbits with low inclinations to the solar plane.
- **Background:** New Horizons was launched on 19 January 2006, and has been travelling through space for the past nine years. New Horizon's core science mission is to map the surfaces of Pluto and Charon, to study Pluto's atmosphere and to take temperature readings.

'Super-Earth' in constellation Cassiopeia

- **What is a Super- Earth?** A super-Earth is an extrasolar planet with a mass higher than Earth's, but substantially below those of the Solar System's ice giants, Uranus and Neptune, which are 15 and 17 times Earth's, respectively.
- **The term "super-Earth"** refers only to the mass of the planet, and so does not imply anything about the surface conditions or habitability.

Hongyun project

- **The spacecraft** is tasked with verifying basic designs of Hongyun satellite and demonstrating low-orbit broadband communications technologies.
- **About Hongyun project:** The Hongyun project, started in September 2016, aims to build a space-based communications network to provide broadband internet connectivity to users around the world, especially those in the underserved regions.
- **When the Hongyun project** is complete, it will cover the whole world and offer round-the-clock communication services to users in polar regions, who now have difficulties accessing telecommunication and internet services, even from on board an aircraft or a ship or in a remote area.
- **The Hongyun system** will feature lower production and operational costs and fewer occurrences of data transmission delays compared with existing communication satellite networks.

Korolev Crater:

- **What is it?** It is an icy- crater on Mars found recently. It was captured by European Space Agency's (ESA) Mars Express mission. The crater floor can reach depths of two kilometers (1.2 miles) below its rim, deeper than Earth's Grand Canyon.

- **Mars Express Mission** was launched back in June 2003 and entered orbit around the red planet in December of the same year. Since then, the probe has been surveying the surface of Mars using a high resolution camera as well as other tools like radars and spectrometers.

National Unity award:

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the institution of a new national honour for National Unity on the pattern of Padma Awards. The annual award would be given to any Indian who has contributed to national unity in any manner.
- **Mount Anak Krakatau:** Context: Both sides of Indonesia's Sunda Strait – Java on the east and Sumatra on the west – have been hit by a tsunami. The tsunami is believed to have been caused by undersea landslides from volcanic activity.
- **What might have triggered the tsunami?** Indonesia's climatology agency (BMKG) said undersea landslides triggered by an eruption of the Mount Anak Krakatau volcano, located about 50km offshore in the Sunda Strait between the islands of Java and Sumatra, may have triggered the tsunami.

Successful Flight Test of Agni – IV:

- **Agni-IV**, the Long Range Surface to Surface Ballistic Missile with a range of 4,000 kms was successfully flight tested recently.
- **The missile** is developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program.
- **Agni IV** is nuclear capable, with a payload capacity of one tonne of high-explosive warhead.
- **The sophisticated** surface-to-surface missile is equipped with modern and compact avionics to provide high level of reliability.
- **The most accurate** Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS) and supported by highly reliable redundant Micro Navigation System (MINGS), ensures the vehicle reaches the target within two digit accuracy.



Amendments to the Information Technology (IT) Act

- **Implications:** The proposed amendments in the draft of the Information Technology [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018, Rule 3(9) is bound to force social media platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter to remain vigil and keep users on their toes before posting or sharing anything that is deemed as "unlawful information or content". The changes proposed by the central government is aimed at curbing fake news or rumours being spread on social media and check mob violence ahead.
- **What the new rules propose?** The changes will require online platforms to break end-to-end encryption in order to ascertain the origin of messages. The social media platforms to "deploy technology based automated tools or appropriate mechanisms, with appropriate controls, for proactively identifying or removing or disabling access to unlawful information or content".
- **As per the amendment,** the social media platforms will need to comply with the central government "within 72 hours" of a query. There should be a 'Nodal person of Contact for 24X7 coordination with law enforcement agencies and officers to ensure compliance. The social media platforms will be keeping a vigil on "unlawful activity" for a period of "180 days".
- **What necessitated this?** With concerns over "rising incidents of violence and lynching in the country due to misuse of social media platforms", there is now need for online platforms to shoulder the "responsibility, accountability and larger commitment to ensure that its platform is not misused on a large scale to spread incorrect facts projected as news and designed to instigate people to commit crime".
- **Criticisms:** The proposed changes have once again given rise to a debate on whether the government is intruding into the privacy of individuals, evoking sharp response from opposition parties. Similar apprehensions were raised with the Section 66A of the IT Act that enabled authorities to arrest users for posting content which was termed as offensive. However, the Supreme Court on March 24, 2015, struck down the law.
- **Background:** India has the second highest number of internet users in the world after China, an estimated 462.12 million. Among them, 258.27 million were likely to be social network users in the country in 2019.

Review Of Aadhaar Verdict

- **The review petition** has been filed against the September 26 verdict of the five-judge constitution bench which had said there was nothing in the Aadhaar Act that violated right to privacy of an individual. The court had also upheld the passage of the Aadhaar Bill as a Money Bill by the Lok Sabha.
- **Background:** While declaring the scheme as constitutionally valid, the top court had struck down some of its provisions including its linking with bank accounts, mobile phones and school admissions. The constitution bench had held that Aadhaar would remain mandatory for filing of Income Tax returns and allotment of Permanent Account Number (PAN).
- **Need for review- demands by the petitioner:** The petition claimed that the Aadhaar program, which had been in existence prior to the enactment of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, had itself become an "instrument of transfer of sensitive personal data" belonging to citizens to foreign entities acting as biometric service providers at a time when the UIDAI in 2010 had no cyber or technical infrastructure to store such information. This, the petition claimed, poses a massive national security risk, more so when, according to a Press Information Bureau notification, 100 crore enrolments had already taken place before April 4, 2016. What was the contention against Aadhaar before the Supreme Court?
- **The main questions raised during the hearing on Aadhaar were:** Is the Aadhaar Act, 2016, constitutionally valid given that it was passed in Parliament as a Money Bill? Why does every citizen need one identity proof — a unique identification number — to acquire government benefits? Can't this be done using other documents, like ration card or passport? Does Aadhaar take away our right to privacy — upheld as a fundamental right by a nine-judge Constitution bench of the court in August last year. What happens if Aadhaar data becomes a tool for mass surveillance by the state, as the movement and activities of users can be tracked by collecting metadata?
- **Supreme Court: Majority Judgement Conclusions:** Supreme Court felt that the technology has become a vital tool for ensuring good governance in a welfare state. Schemes such as PDS, scholarships, Mid-day Meals and LPG subsidies involve huge amount of money and Aadhaar helped welfare reach of the poor as a fool-proof mechanism.

- **Majority opinion** upholds Aadhaar as a reasonable restriction on privacy. It fulfils Government's aim to provide dignity to the marginalised. Aadhaar unique ID cannot be duplicated, whereas, PAN, Ration Card can be duplicated. It upheld the passage of the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill.
- **The authentication** records should not be retained for more than 6 months. Archiving of records for five years is bad in law. SC struck down Section 33 (2), which allowed the disclosure of Aadhaar information for national security reasons on the orders of an officer not below a Joint Secretary level.

Chabahar port

- **Iran formally** handed over the port to India during a first meeting of the follow-up committee for the implementation of the Chabahar Agreement between Iran, Afghanistan, and India held recently in the port city Tehran.
- **Background:** The Chabahar Agreement was signed in June 2015 and approved by Iran's Guardian Council in November 2016. Chabahar is being seen as a gateway for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with Central Asian countries.
- **Where is Chabahar port?** Iran's Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country. The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast.
- **Why Chabahar port is crucial for India?** The first and foremost significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan. Chabahar port will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- **Chabahar port** will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port. Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.
- **With Chabahar port** being developed and operated by India, Iran also becomes a military ally to India. Chabahar could be used in case China decides to flex its navy muscles by stationing ships in Gwadar port to reckon its upper hand in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Middle East.
- **With Chabahar port** becoming functional, there will be a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India. The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline. India has already increased its crude purchase from Iran since the West imposed ban on Iran was lifted.
- **Chabahar port** will ensure in the establishment of a politically sustainable connectivity between India and Afghanistan. This will in turn, lead to better economic ties between the two countries. From a diplomatic perspective, Chabahar port could be used as a point from where humanitarian operations could be coordinated.

Polavaram multi-purpose project

- **The Polavaram project** was accorded national status in 2014 in the Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation Act and its design was changed.
- **About the Polavaram project:** Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project. The dam across the Godavari River is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.
- **The project** is multipurpose major terminal reservoir project on river Godavari for development of Irrigation, Hydropower and drinking water facilities to East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, West Godavari and Krishna districts of Andhra Pradesh. The project is likely to displace over 1.88 lakh people across 222 villages and so far, 1,730 persons in six villages have been rehabilitated by the government.

Bullet Train

- **Concerns over the project:** Several objections have been raised by various departments over the economic viability of the Shinkansen train, which could result in losses in the form of wasted Floor Space Index (FSI) and delayed loan repayment in the absence of proper frameworks.
- **Some part of the FSI** at the station proposed at Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) in Mumbai could “remain unutilised because of the height restrictions, leading to revenue losses”.
- **Criticisms:** The government is being criticised for clearing a project which has no practical benefit for the State and would add financial stress. Moreover, the ministerial committee headed by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has not met to discuss the project since being incorporated in February 2017. The committee was tasked with carrying out an in-depth study of the Japan International Cooperation Agency report and the project’s feasibility.
- **Need of the hour:** Both Planning and Finance departments have called for a thorough study of bullet train economics in other countries before a decision is taken on its feasibility in India. Additionally, the departments said the Centre must clarify the formula for sharing the loan burden if the project remains loss-making for a long period of time. Since the State is coping with serious loss in income and further burden of loans, the impact of this project on government finances needs to be considered.
- **About the project:** The train, with a capacity of 750 passengers, will travel at speeds between 320 km/hr and 350km/hr and is expected to reduce travel time between Ahmedabad and Mumbai to three-and-a-half hours or less from the present eight. The project is expected to be completed in seven years.
- **How India benefits from bullet train?** High-speed connectivity – This will facilitate economic growth. Smaller cities along the way can also be connected with high-speed transit facility to these economic Centres through the bullet train network.
- **The bullet train** project is expected to create 4,000 direct job opportunities, along with 20,000 indirect jobs. 20,000 construction workers will also be employed during the set up period of Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train.
- **Urban expansion** – New bullet train stations set to come up along the route will attract urban growth. This will again shift the pressure of urbanisation from the existing urban Centres.
- **Open new avenues** – When completed, the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project will present as a favorable destination for high-speed train technologies, attracting other parties working in the field.
- **The geostrategic importance of Bullet trains is:** The bullet train is symbol of strong trust between the India and Japan as it involves the technology transfer at the core of this deal. The bullet train will create substantial positive impact on Indian economy thus building the economic influence of country in Asia and thus all over the world. In longer duration of time, this technology will reduce the dependence of India on Middle East countries for oil and other fuel products.
- **Being the clean technology** India will set an example for cleaner methods for mass transportation, especially for other developing countries. For Japan too, this deal has geostrategic meaning. Earlier Japan has lost with China in export of Bullet trains in Thailand and Indonesia. This deal is diplomatic win for Japan.

India’s Longest Railroad Bridge:

- **Context:** The Bogibeel bridge is India’s longest railroad bridge. It was inaugurated recently.
- **Key facts:** The bridge is 4.94 km long in length. The double decker rail and road bridge, on the Brahmaputra river, will cut down the train-travel time between Tinsukia in Assam to Naharlagun town of Arunachal Pradesh by more than 10 hours.
- **Built by the Indian Railways**, the double-decker bridge is strong enough to withstand movement of heavy military tanks.
- **The Bogibeel bridge** will connect the south bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam’s Dibrugarh district with Silapathar in Dhemaji district, bordering Arunachal Pradesh. The railways have reduced the distance between Dhemaji and Dibrugarh from 500 Kms to 100 kms with the completion of the project.



YEAR ENDER-1-SBM(U) 2018- Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs

- **Swachh Survekshan 2018 ranked 4,203 Cities** Swachh Survekshan -2019, Paperless & Digital, to commence from 4th Jan covering all cities. SBM (Urban)-4,124 Cities & 21 States / UTs declared ODF 62 Lakh individual Toilets & 5 Lakh Public Toilets constructed/under construction ODF+ and ODF++ Protocols' launched with a focus on sustaining ODF outcomes and achieving holistic sanitation Star Rating Protocol or Garbage Free Cities' launched to motivate cities to achieve Garbage free status
- **URBAN RENAISSANCE: REJUVENATING & TRANSFORMING INDIAN CITIES, BEING ACHIEVED THROUGH INFUSION OF MORE THAN RS.6,85,758 CR**
- **The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** has embarked upon one of the most ambitious programmes undertaken in the world for Urban renaissance for rejuvenating and transforming Indian cities through a number of initiatives including infusion of more than Rs. 6,85,758 crore for ensuring citizen friendly urban areas.
- **The transformation** has been undertaken by way of implementing key urban reforms, projects for urban rejuvenation, construction of public and household toilets and solid waste management under the Swachh Bharat Mission, initiation and implementation of more than 5000 smart city projects worth Rs.2,05,018 crore under the Smart City Mission, sanctioning of more than 65 lakh houses for construction under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in urban areas, provision of water, sewerage and sanitation under the Mission AMRUT by sanctioning projects worth Rs.77,640 crore, augmenting the urban transport by way of new metro lines, embarking on an ambitious target for skill development of urban youth for gainful employment under DAY-NULM and approving implementation of city HRIDAY plans for 12 cities.
- **The Ministry** is also vigorously pursuing reforms in the real estate sector for the benefit of homebuyers by ensuring implementation of RERA in all parts of the country.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION - URBAN

- **Since April 2018, an additional 1,612 cities** have been declared as ODF taking the total number to 4,124. Construction of almost 62 lakh Individual Household Toilets (IHHL) and 5 lakh Community and Public Toilet seats (CT/PT) is already over or nearing completion. Further, Urban areas of 21 States/UTs have been declared ODF (namely, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Chandigarh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Punjab, and Karnataka).
- **"Swachh Bharat Mission"**(Urban) was launched on 2nd October 2014 for 5-year period with the objective of achieving 100% open defecation free (ODF) status and putting in place systems to achieve 100% solid waste management in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the country.
- **To enable people** to easily locate public toilets and give feedback on the same, a major initiative of mapping all public toilets in the country on Google Maps has been launched. So far, 835 cities have uploaded more than 33,000 Public Toilets on google maps.

MoHUA has also launched the following:

- **'ODF+ and ODF++ protocols'**, with a focus on sustaining ODF outcomes and achieving holistic sanitation (wherein ODF+ protocol focuses on O&M of community / public toilets by ensuring functionality and proper maintenance of CT/PTs for their continued usage, and ODF++ focuses on addressing safe management of faecal sludge from toilets, and ensuring that no untreated sludge is discharged into open drains, water bodies or in the open),

- **'Star Rating Protocol** or garbage free cities' to motivate cities to achieve garbage free status. It is a single metric rating system, based on 12 parameters of Solid Waste Management covering, Source segregation, Door to Door Collection, compliance by bulk waste generators, daily sweeping, scientific processing of waste, scientific land filling, plastic waste management, construction and demolition waste management, dumpsite remediation, citizen grievance redressal system etc, all of which together contribute to a city's overall cleanliness and garbage free status.
- **'Swachh Manch'**, which acts as an online knowledge management and stakeholder engagement portal to galvanize the SBM into a true 'Jan Andolan'.

SWACHH SURVEKSHAN

- **In order** to foster a healthy competition between cities for improving cleanliness standards, Swachh Survekshan survey was conducted for the rating of 73 cities in 2016 followed by 'Swachh Survekshan-2017' which ranked 434 cities. Indore secured 1st rank in 'Swachh Survekshan' 2017. The third round was conducted from 4th January to 10th March, 2018 covering 4,203 statutory towns in India. Indore, Bhopal and Chandigarh have emerged as the top 3 cleanest cities in the country.
- **Swachh Survekshan 2019**, launched on 13th Aug 2018, will cover all ULBs in the country and commence from 4th January 2019. To inculcate behavioural change, a national helpline number – 1969 has been launched,
- **to address** queries from citizens around Swachh Bharat Mission. A 'Swachhata' app has been launched as a grievance redressal platform for any complaints from citizens related to cleanliness. SBM-Urban has introduced an online educational portal where 150 best practices have been uploaded, in the form of training modules. An innovative audio campaign titled 'Swachhata Selfie' has been launched.
- **Currently**, 71,797 wards out of 84,229 wards, i.e. 85 % of wards, are practicing door to door collection, and 46.03% of waste generated is being processed. Waste-to-Compost (WTC) plants-635 Plants are operational with 40.47 lakh TPA compost production capacity and 206 Plants with 6.84 lakh TPA output capacity are in progress. Waste-to-Energy (WtE) plants-7 Plants are operational with 88.4 MW capacity and 56 Plants with 415 MW capacity are in progress. It has been made mandatory for DISCOMs

Some Success Stories

- **Ambikapur in Chhatisgarh** has no open dumping yards, segregating 100% of its waste and generating ₹13 lakh every month through their innovative Solid Liquid Waste Management (SLRM) approach being run by 623 by 623 women self-help group members.
- **Tertiary segregation centre at sanitation park, Ambikapur**. Replicating this model across all its ULBs, Chhatisgarh is on its way to becoming a Zero Landfill state.
- **Mysuru** is one of the pioneering cities in providing sustainable solutions for waste management. The corporation has set up 9 Zero waste management units and 47 material recovery facilities in the city to manage its entire solid waste generated.
- **Kerala** has been leading the way in decentralized waste management with most of its cities having installed pipe compost and bio gas plants at the household level.
- **Goa** has proven how waste can be an asset through its source segregation into 5 fractions. The city claims 100% door to door collection. Most residential societies have composting units and kitchen gardens in place for utilizing the compost produced.
- **Aligarh** has introduced 'magic bricks' made out of dry waste which can be used in construction activities

Entrepreneurship under the Mission

- **A notable feature** under the Mission has been the emergence of groups of citizen entrepreneurs who have set up innovative business models in the waste management sector. For example,

- **Spruce Up Industries:** Pune developed a street cleaning machine named 'Jatayu' to clean-up narrow road sections where the present automated cleaning machines struggle to enter
- **In Shirdi,** the Janseva foundation has set up a "Waste to Best' project, where discarded flower waste is converted into compost and agarbattis, .
- **Bengaluru** based Daily Dump designs affordable home and community compost systems, and helps manage household/ community organic waste and convert it to useful high-quality compost

Prithvi

- **Kanpur-based DE'DZINES** is engaged in making recycled furniture and decor items handcrafted from waste tyre.



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Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Act, 2018 Comes in to Effect

- **IT Education Launched for Ayush Professionals in Collaboration with C-DAC** The Ministry of AYUSH through its multi pronged strategy in year 2018 has been able to bring alternative system of medicine particularly Ayurveda and Homeopathy in to mainstream of the public health system in India. During the year, usage of Information Technology in AYUSH system was given prominence, new Hospital and Research Centers opened and MoUs signed with several stakeholders including several Ministries and Countries for disseminating benefits of traditional systems all over the country and abroad.
- **The Ministry** continued to propagate, publicise and popularise the alternate system of medicine with an aim of minimising the gap between demand and supply of medical facilities in the country. Following are the significant achievements and details of the important activities of Ministry of AYUSH during the year.
- **Reform Measures** The Central Government promulgated the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, (No.4 of 2018) dated 18th May, 2018. Through the Ordinance, the Central Council of Homoeopathy(CCH), the statutory regulatory body for Homoeopathy system of medicine has been superseded by Board of Governors with a view to bring necessary regulatory reforms in the field of Homoeopathy education and ensuring transparency and accountability for improving standards in Homoeopathy medical education.
- **In order to ensure transparency**, improve the quality and functioning of AYUSH colleges, the President had promulgated the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 on 18th May, 2018 with the following objectives:-
- **(a) To constitute a Board of Governors** by superseding the Central Council of Homoeopathy till a new Central Council was duly reconstituted within a period of one year from the date of supersession of the Central Council;
- **(b) To make provision** for obtaining prior permission of the Central Government by all Homoeopathy Medical Colleges for admission. In order to replace the ordinance with an Act, the Ministry introduced the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2018 during the Monsoon session of the Parliament. This has been approved by the President on 13th August, 2018 and the corresponding Act, namely, Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Act, 2018 published in the Gazette of India as Act No. 23 of 2018.
- **Establishment of Central Institutes** The foundation stone of National Institute of Homoeopathy at Narela, Delhi has been laid by MoS for AYUSH Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, on 16th October, 2018. Total project Cost is Rs. 259.12 crore. An All India Institute of Ayurveda, (AIIA) Phase-II SaritaVihar has also been started this year. The total Project Cost is Rs. 209.33 Crore.

Use of Information Technology in AYUSH Sector

- **A new course** on IT education was launched for AYUSH professionals in collaboration with C-DAC.
- **Ministry of AYUSH** has registered a remarkable presence on social media. AYUSH systems have been promoted on Ministry's various Social Media Platforms i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Blog and Twitter and also at MyGov Platform to benefit the various strata of population about the AYUSH systems.
- **Ministry** is also developing a cloud based AYUSH GRID under the digital India mission. All the AYUSH Teaching Institutes, Hospitals and industry will be linked to AYUSH Grid.
- **The Ministry** of AYUSH was on the top spot of Broadcast Audience Research Council's (BARC) top 10 brands during the week 25 (June 16-22, 2018) with 14,731 insertions.

MoUs at National and International level

- **An MoU between University of Mauritius** and Central Council for Research in Ayurveda Sciences (CCRAS) autonomous organization under Ministry of AYUSH was signed on 14th March, 2018 for establishing AYUSH Academics Chair in Ayurveda.
- **An MoU between Ministry** of AYUSH and Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Government of Equatorial Guinea on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine was signed on the 8th April, 2018.
- **A Country to Country MoU** between Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy was signed on the 22nd June, 2018.
- **A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** has been signed between the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), Ministry of AYUSH and The Medical University of Graz, Graz, Austria on 26.09.2018 at Austria to cooperation and collaboration in the field of Ayurveda.
- **MoU between Ministry of AYUSH** and Ministry of Railways, Govt. of India was signed for establishment of AYUSH wings at 05 Railway Hospitals. It will open the doors of job opportunity to AYUSH graduates in Ministry of Railways. The Ministry of AYUSH also entered into an MoU with Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Boston, USA and Harvard Medical School, USA.

Yoga a Mass Movement

- **Ministry of AYUSH**, the nodal Ministry for celebration of International Day of Yoga (IDY) across the country, successfully coordinated various IDY-2018 across the country.
- **The National event** was held at Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, Uttarakhand, wherein approximately 50,000 people participated in the Mass Yoga Demonstration, alongwith the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Apart from common people, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel's, National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets, students of various educational institutes, Nehru Yuvak Kendra (NYKs) National Service Scheme (NSS), and various Yoga institutes were participated in this mega event.
- **A series of Yoga programmes** were conducted in national capital (Delhi). The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and Delhi Development Authority (DDA) had organised 04 and 03 events respectively. In addition to this, one more mega event was organized by Brahmakumaris at Red Fort, with nearly 30,000 participants wherein 2000 Woman Police Force also attended. Altogether, around 65,000 people participated in the Delhi.

Prime Minister's Yoga Awards

- **One of the highlights** of IDY observation is the announcement of the Prime Minister's Yoga Awards. The awards are given away each year for exemplary contribution in the field of Yoga towards the development and promotion of Yoga.
- **This year the Awards have been conferred on one individual and one institution, as follows:** (i) Sh. Vishwas Vasant Mandalik, Nasik (National – Individual category) (ii) The Yoga Institute, Mumbai (National – Institution category) Yoga Ambassadors' Tour: The Yoga Ambassadors' Tour being organized in collaboration with Kerala Tourism on 14th June, 2018. 52 participants from 22 countries joined in the Yoga Tour. The tour was culminated on 21st June, 2018 with a grand celebration of International Day of Yoga.
- **The Ministry of AYUSH**, through Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy (CCRYN), had organized one-month free Yoga training programme in around 600 districts across the country through Govt. Organisations/ NGOs, ahead of IDY. It had also organized 11 one day workshop on Yoga for Women in the 40+ age group in association with Indian Menopause Society in different parts of the country.
- **International Naturopathy Organisation (INO)** had trained more than 51 lakh people in Yoga during the IDY-2018. Several State Governments like Punjab, Haryana, UP etc. have trained people on this occasion in large numbers.
- **Two mobile technology based** applications deployed by the Ministry, namely BHUVAN-YOGA (developed by ISRO) and Yoga Locator, contributed to the public mobilization for IDY-2018. The former helped to assess the magnitude of participation at different venues and the later helped the public to locate events near them. The data collected through these apps are being analysed and collated statistically to gather a better picture of the extent of participation in IDY-2018.

National level Events

- **The Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY)** an autonomous organization under Ministry of AYUSH organized an International Yoga Fest (IYF), a Curtain Raiser for International Day of Yoga-2018, from 21-23rd March, 2018 and Pre-Fest Yoga Workshops by Eminent Yoga Masters from 19-20th March 2018, at MDNIY & Yoga Centres at SAI Stadia.
- **The main objective of IYF** was to sensitize the masses regarding celebration of International Day of Yoga on June 21. A total of 120 workshops were conducted from 19-20th March, 2018 where 5000 Sadhaks got the benefit. International delegates of more than 16 countries across the Globe participated IYF-2018
- **The Ministry of AYUSH** conducted a Conference of Heads of AYUSH National Institutes on 17 & 18 July 2018 with the objectives to upgrade the Standard of Education, Research & Health Care; harmonise & rationalize the infrastructure and activities of the National Institutes; fund and Resource generation for sustainable development; and networking and collaboration among the National Institutes.
- **In addition to discussion** on various issues, an MOU was signed between All India Institute of Ayurveda, SaritaVihar and Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi on Co-operation and Collaboration in the field of Research and Development in Ayurveda. Protocols on Development of Standard Operating procedures on Pre-conceptional and Pre-natal care through Ayurveda and Standard Operating procedures of Uttaravasti have been released during the session.
- **An "International Conference on Yoga for Public Health"** was organised by Ministry of AYUSH at Panaji, Goa. The Conference was attended by 600 Indian and foreign delegates including 20 Yoga experts from 11 countries. The event provided the foreign participants an opportunity to capture and understand various dimensions of Yoga and to help them further propagate the same in their respective countries.

National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) :

- **To ensure availability and regular** supply of raw material of medicinal plants for AYUSH drugs, the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) under its "Central Sector Scheme on Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants" is augmenting the medicinal plants resources in the wild and also promoting their large scale cultivation in farmers' field under Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National AYUSH Mission (NAM).
- **The major achievements of NMPB are as under:** NMPB in collaboration with National Remote Sensing Centre, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) developed e-Bhuvan herbs mobile app. for geo-tagging and monitoring of the organizations funded by NMPB for carrying out various activities related to medicinal plants.
- **NMPB has collaborated** with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to implement space based tools in monitoring & strategic decision making in the field of medicinal Plants.

Other Achievements

- **Yoga protocols for separate groups**, viz. pregnant ladies, lactating mothers, adolescent girls and (children in the age group of 3-6 years), were developed in consultation with Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY). This protocol was forwarded to Ministry of Women & Child Development for using the same in connection with PoshanAbhiyaan.
- **Pursuant to the initiative** taken by Ministry of AYUSH to open AYUSH Hospitals by public sector companies, the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has agreed to establish five AYUSH centres at Kayamkulam, Koldam, Tapovan, Vindhyachal and Farakka.
- **M/o Power agreed to establish** 05 AYUSH Centres/Hospitals through NTPC at different locations in the country viz. Kayamkulam, Koldam, Tapovan, Vindhyachal and Farakka.

- **Pharmacovigilance of ASU&H drugs:** A Central Sector Scheme of 'Pharmacovigilance Initiative for ASU&H Drugs' has been implemented by the Ministry of AYUSH from the financial year 2017-18. The scheme has established a National Pharmacovigilance Coordination centre for collecting reports on quality aspects from 05 intermediary and 43 peripheral centres with a financial allocation to the tune of Rs 1.66 crore approved for implementation of the initiative in 2018-19.
- **NABH Accreditation:** For the first time, the Ministry of AYUSH through its continuous efforts has got the hospitals viz., National Institute of Naturopathy, Pune, Maharashtra, National Institute of Unani Medicine, Bangalore, Karnataka, National Institute of Yoga, Delhi and National Institute of Siddha, Chennai, NABH accredited. Ministry of AYUSH has made it obligatory for AYUSH hospitals for their accreditation to NABH standards with a view to enhancing the quality and safety aspects. Till date a total of 62 AYUSH hospitals have got the NABH accreditation.
- **"Ayush" Finds a Place in English Language** In pursuance of the proposal of the Ministry of AYUSH the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology has decided to adopt the word "AYUSH" in Hindi and English languages for scientific and technical purposes. As approved by the Commission, the word "AYUSH" will have the meaning "Traditional and Non-Conventional Systems of Health Care and Healing which include Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, Homoeopathy etc."

Major Activities of Research Councils: Development of new drugs and commercialisation:

- **CCRAS has developed** new drugs for different disease conditions. These are AYUSH Manas for Mental retardation/cognitive deficit, AYUSH QOL for improving quality of life of Cancer patients, AYUSH Rasayan A & B in geriatric health, AYUSH M-3 for Migraine, AYUSH SL for Filariasis, AYUSH A for Bronchial Asthma, AYUSH D for Type II Diabetes Miletus, Carctol S for Cancer, AYUSH K1 for chronic Kidney Diseases, Ayurveda drug for Non-Alcoholic fatty liver disease and Ayurveda drug as adjuvant to ATT for hepatoprotection. These formulations are at different phases of drug development.

Commercialisation of drugs:

- **Further CCRAS** has commercialized already developed products namely Ayush-82 for Type –II Diabetes and Ayush SG for Rheumatoid arthritis NRDC in last two years and now these formulations are already available in the market for general public which are cost effective and the people are using these formulations for diabetes and Rheumatoid arthritis. The Council has also commercialised AYUSH 64.
- **In Central Council of Research** in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) one project each in Collaboration Clinical Research, Medicinal plant Research Drug standardization, Literary Research have been completed. Total 4 projects have been completed during October, 2018.
- **Central Council of Research** in Ayurveda (CCRAS) has completed Clinical Research in 1 IMR project. 1 IMR project of Drug Standardization Programme and 1 IMR project of Clinical Research, has been initiated.
- **Officials from Central Council** for Research in Siddha (CCRS) attended and presented the Research work of the IMR project entitled "Geo-chemical characterization of Muppu" in the 1st National Bio-Medical Research competition on the occasion of 87th anniversary of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam organized by AIIMS, Rishikesh held on 15th October, 2018 and won the Yong Researcher award.
- **Swasthya Rakshan Programme** has been executed through 7 CCRS Institutes/Units in 3 states 2 union territories. 12 locations were covered and medical care and awareness about hygiene and health was also provided to the people.
- **Central Council for Research in Siddha** with the support of Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India organised a National Conference on "Global Acceptance for Siddha System of Medicine: Scope and Challenges" which was held on 28th & 29th September, 2018 at AmmaArangam, Community Hall, Shenoy Nagar, Chennai.

Important Days Celebrated

- **Ministry of AYUSH** organized the First Siddha Day 2018 at Dr. MGR Medical University, Chennai on 4th January, 2018 through Central Council of Siddha (CCRS), Chennai to generate awareness among the people about the Siddha system of Medicine.

- **The Central Council** for Research in Unani Medicine organized an International Conference on Unani Medicine on the occasion of Unani Day during 10th and 11th February 2018 in New Delhi. The subject of the conference was 'Integration of Unani System of Medicine in Mainstream Healthcare'. Around 440 professionals participated in the Conference. International delegates from 12 countries attended the conference. A total of 10 AYUSH Awards were distributed in different categories of Unani Medicine.
- **As integral part of Celebration** of 3rd Ayurveda Day, 2018, the Council has setup Ayurveda countdown corners from 16.09.2018 (50 days to go) at CCRAS Hqrs. and all 30 Research Institutes and Centres functioning under it across the country. The core activities comprise public lecture on Ayurveda & its importance, Medicinal plant exhibition, half day marathon and free distribution of sapling of medicinal plants etc. On this occasion, "The Social Media Secretariat" was formally inaugurated.
- **The month of September was celebrated** as "PoshanMaah" in all the AYUSH hospitals/ dispensaries, teaching institutes, research councils and their peripheral units under the M/o AYUSH in accordance with the guidelines of M/o AYUSH, M/o Women and Child Development, M/o H&FW and Department of School Education and Literacy. Various state AYUSH hospitals/ dispensaries, AYUSH National institutes/ teaching institutes and five research councils and their field units organized various nutritional and health camps for adolescent girls, pregnant ladies, lactating women and children. The success of camps was also marked by a team of UNICEF who covered the activities among their video production team at Central Ayurveda Research Institute for Cardiovascular Diseases (CARICD) on 15.09.2018.



Year End Review-2018: Department of Food & Public Distribution

- **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** Following are the major highlights of the activities of the Department of Food & Public Distribution during the year 2018:
- **Implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA)** Persistent efforts has resulted in universal implementation of the NFSA, 2013 in all 36 States & UTs, benefiting 80.72 crore persons in the country by providing them access to highly subsidized foodgrains at Rs.1/2/3 per kg. for coarse grains/wheat/rice respectively.
- **The prices of foodgrains** specified under NFSA – Rs.3 per kg for rice, Rs.2 per kg for wheat and Re.1 per kg for coarse grains were initially valid for a period of three years from the coming into force of the NFSA. These rates were extended from time to time upto June, 2018. These have been further extended upto June, 2019.
- **During the Financial Year 2018-19** (upto 05.12.2018), Rs. 2575 crore has been released to State Governments as Central assistance to meet the expenditure incurred on intra-State movement & handling of foodgrains and fair price shop dealers' margins. Such an arrangement has been made for the first time under NFSA. Under erstwhile TPDS, State Governments were required to either meet this expenditure on their own or pass it on to beneficiaries (other than AAY beneficiaries).
- **End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations** As an outcome of digitization of Ration Card/beneficiary records, de-duplication due to Aadhaar seeding, transfer/migration/deaths, change in economic status of beneficiaries, and during the run-up to and implementation of NFSA, a total of 2.75 Crore ration cards have been deleted/cancelled by State/UT Governments during the years 2013 to 2017 (up to November 2017). Based on this the Government has been able to achieve an estimated 'Rightful Targeting of Food Subsidies' of about Rs. 17,500 Crore per annum.
- **To modernize** and to bring about transparency in the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Department is implementing scheme on End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations at a total cost of 884 Crore on cost-sharing basis with the States/UTs. The Scheme provides for digitization of ration cards & beneficiary records, computerization of supply chain management, setting up of transparency portals and grievance redressal mechanisms.

Toll-free helplines/Online registration facility is available in all States/UTs.

- **To identify** and weed-out duplicate/ineligible beneficiaries, and to enable rightful targeting of food subsidies, seeding of Aadhaar numbers of beneficiaries with their Ration Cards is being done by States and UTs. Presently, 85.61% of all ration cards have been seeded.
- **As part of the scheme**, electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices are being installed at Fair Price Shops (FPSs) for distribution of foodgrains through authentication and electronic record-keeping of the sale transactions. As on date, 3.61 lakh FPSs out of total 5.34 lakh FPSs have ePoS devices in 29 States/UTs.
- **Intra state portability** of ration cards: Facility enabling PDS beneficiaries to lift their entitled foodgrains from any fair price shop in the State has been started fully in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tripura, Kerala and partially in Madhya Pradesh.
- **'Integrated Management of PDS' (IM-PDS):** A new Central Sector Scheme has been approved to be implemented during FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 for establishing Public Distribution System Network (PDSN) to implement national level portability, central data repository and central monitoring system of PDS operations.
- **Launch of ePoS transactions portal:** Annavitran Portal (www.annavitran.nic.in) has been implemented to display electronic transactions made through ePoS devices for distribution of subsidized foodgrains to beneficiaries. This portal also shows all India picture of Aadhaar authentication of beneficiaries besides allocated and distributed quantity of foodgrains up to district level.

Supporting the Farmer

- **During KMS 2017-18**, a record quantity of 381.84 Lakh MT paddy (in terms of rice) was procured. In 2016-17 KMS it was 381.07 LMT. During RMS 2018-19, a quantity of 357.95 lakh MT of wheat was procured which is highest in last five years. In RMS 2017-18 this was 308.24 LMT.
- **4. Improving Foodgrain Management** About 40 million tonnes of food grains are transported by FCI across the country in a year. Movement of food grain is undertaken by rail, road, sea, coastal and riverine systems. In 2017-18, FCI has moved 134 container rakes against the target of 100 leading to approx. freight savings of Rs. 662 lakhs. During 2018-19, 77 rakes have been moved (as on 15.10.2018) which led to approx. freight savings of Rs. 352 lakhs.
- **5. Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)** The process of registration of warehouses with WDRA has been simplified. The new rules will promote increase in the number of warehouses registered with WDRA. This would enhance facility of pledge finance for the farmers through Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWR) system. During the year Rs. 51.45 crore loans have been availed against NWRs upto 31.10.2018. Electronic Negotiable Warehousing Receipt (eNWR) System and WDRA Portal has been launched to transform the process of registration of warehouses online and to issue e-NWR instead of paper-NWR which will be a more credible financing tool.

Sugar Sector

- **Due to surplus** sugar production and depressed ex-mill prices of sugar the liquidity position of sugar mills was adversely affected leading to accumulation of cane price dues which reached to an alarming level of about Rs.23,232 crores in the last week of May, 2018. With a view to improve the liquidity position of sugar mills enabling them to clear cane price arrears of farmers, the Government has taken the following measures during last few months:-
- **In order to prevent** cash loss and to facilitate sugar mills to clear cane dues of farmers in time, the Government has fixed a minimum selling price of sugar at Rs.29/kg for sale at factory gate in domestic market, below which no sugar mill can sell sugar.
- **Extending Assistance** to sugar mills @Rs.5.50/quintal of cane crushed for sugar season 2017-18 to offset the cost of cane amounting to about Rs.1540 crore; Created buffer stock of 30 LMT in sugar season 2017-18 for which Government will reimburse carrying cost of Rs.1175 crore towards maintenance of buffer stock; Extending soft loans of Rs. 6139 crore through banks to the mills for setting up new distilleries and installation of incineration boilers to augment ethanol production capacity for which Government will bear interest subvention of Rs. 1332 crore;
- **Extending Assistance** to sugar mills @Rs.13.88/quintal of cane crushed for sugar season 2018-19 to offset the cost of cane amounting to about Rs.4163 crore; Extending Assistance to sugar mills for defraying expenditure towards internal transport, freight, handling and other charges to facilitate export of sugar from the country in sugar season 2018-19 amounting to about Rs. 1375 crore. Government has also notified new National Policy on Bio-Fuels, 2018 under which sugarcane juice has been allowed for production of ethanol. Further, the Government has fixed remunerative price of ethanol produced from C-Heavy molasses and B-Heavy molasses/sugarcane juice separately for supply under EBP during ethanol season 2018-19.
- **As a result of above measures**, all India cane price arrears of farmers have also come down to Rs. 5465 crore from the peak arrears of about Rs. 23232 crore on State Advised Price (SAP) basis for sugar season 2017-18. On FRP basis, all India cane price arrears of farmers have come down to Rs. 1924 crore from the peak arrears of about Rs. 14538 crore.

Tansen Samman

- **Key facts:** The prestigious 'National Tansen Samman' is a musical award conferred to the exponents of Hindustani music. This award carries a cash prize of Rs. 2 Lakh along with a memento.
- **The Tansen Music Festival** is organised every year by Madhya Pradesh culture department in the memory of Tansen, one of the greatest artists in Indian history. It is held annually in Gwalior.
- **About Tansen:** He was a prominent figure of Hindustani classical music. He began his career and spent most of his adult life in the court and patronage of the Hindu king of Rewa, Raja Ramchandra Singh (1555–1592), where Tansen's musical abilities and studies gained widespread fame. This reputation brought him to the attention of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who sent messengers to Raja Ramchandra Singh, requesting Tansen to join the musicians at the Mughal court.
- **Akbar considered** him as a Navaratnas (nine jewels), and gave him the title Mian, an honorific, meaning learned man. Tansen is remembered for his epic Dhrupad compositions, creating several new ragas, as well as for writing two classic books on music Sri Ganesh Stotra and Sangita Sara.

RBI Panel on Economic Capital Framework

- **The expert panel** on RBI's economic capital framework has been formed to address the issue of RBI reserves—one of the sticking points between the central bank and the government.
- **What's the issue?** The government has been insisting that the central bank hand over its surplus reserves amid a shortfall in revenue collections. Access to the funds will allow the government to meet deficit targets, infuse capital into weak banks to boost lending and fund welfare programmes.
- **Terms of reference:** The panel will decide whether RBI is holding provisions, reserves and buffers in surplus of the required levels. It would propose a suitable profits distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including the situations of holding more provisions than required and the RBI holding less provisions than required. The ECF committee will also suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain. That apart, any other related matter, including treatment of surplus reserves created out of realized gains, will also come within the ambit of this committee.
- **What is economic capital framework?** Economic capital framework refers to the risk capital required by the central bank while taking into account different risks. The economic capital framework reflects the capital that an institution requires or needs to hold as a counter against unforeseen risks or events or losses in the future.
- **Why it needs a fix?** Existing economic capital framework which governs the RBI's capital requirements and terms for the transfer of its surplus to the government is based on a conservative assessment of risk by the central bank and that a review of the framework would result in excess capital being freed, which the RBI can then share with the government.
- **The government believes** that RBI is sitting on much higher reserves than it actually needs to tide over financial emergencies that India may face. Some central banks around the world (like US and UK) keep 13% to 14% of their assets as a reserve compared to RBI's 27% and some (like Russia) more than that. Economists in the past have argued for RBI releasing 'extra' capital that can be put to productive use by the government. The Malegam Committee estimated the excess (in 2013) at Rs 1.49 lakh crore.
- **What is the nature of the arrangement between the government and RBI on the transfer of surplus or profits?** Although RBI was promoted as a private shareholders' bank in 1935 with a paid up capital of Rs 5 crore, the government nationalised it in January 1949, making the sovereign its "owner". What the central bank does, therefore, is transfer the "surplus" — that is, the excess of income over expenditure — to the government, in accordance with Section 47 (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. Does the RBI pay tax on these earnings or profits? No. Its statute provides exemption from paying income-tax or any other tax, including wealth tax.

New High Court for Andhra Pradesh

- **The new High Court** for Andhra Pradesh will be the 25th High Court in the country. The new Andhra HC is expected to function from a temporary structure in Amaravati till a permanent building is set up at the 'Justice City' being planned in Amaravati.
- **Constitutional provisions related to High Court in India:** Article 214 provides that every State shall have a High Court, however, Article 231 states that Article 214 shall not be a bar for constituting a common high court for two or more States.
- **Only Parliament** may by law establish a Common High Court for two or more States. This means that, unless Parliament by law establishes a Common High Court for two or more States, every State has to have a High Court, i.e., upon formation of a new State a new High Court is also formed. Article 216 provides that every High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and such other number of judges as the President may from time to time deem necessary to appoint. Article 217 relates to appointment of HC judges.

Niti Aayog releases second Delta Ranking of Aspirational districts

- **How are districts ranked?** The districts have been ranked in a transparent basis on parameters across various performance indicators like Health and Nutrition, Education, Skill Development and Basic Infrastructure among others.

- **The rankings** are based on the data that is publicly available through the Champions of Change Dashboard, which includes data entered on a real-time basis at the district level.
- **Performances of various districts:** Top performers: Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu has shown the most improvement overall, followed by Nuapada district in Odisha, Siddharthnagar in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar's Aurangabad and Koraput in Odisha. These districts have championed the development narrative in fundamental parameters of social progress. Least performers: Meanwhile, Nagaland's Kiphire district, Jharkhand's Giridih, Chatra in Jharkhand, Hailakandi in Assam, and Pakur in Jharkhand have shown least improvement.
- **About Aspirational Districts Programme:** Launched in January this year, the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme aims to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country. The broad contours of the programme are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts driven by a Mass Movement or a Jan Andolan. With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.
- **Focus of the programme:** To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme's core areas of focus.
- **Significance of the scheme:** If these districts are transformed, there would be tremendous improvement in the internal security environment of the country. If Prabhari officers can bring convergence in the development efforts of different Ministries and state Governments and the schemes specially launched by Home Ministry in these districts, it would serve as a great opportunity to ensure rapid development in the country.

DIPP Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge Awards Presented

- **DIPP Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge Awards Presented** As part of the Swachhta Pakhwada held from 1st to 15th November, 2018, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) organized a Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge.
- **Four Areas selected for the grand challenge:** Sanitation Waste Management Water and Wastewater management Air Management Objective of the award: This was organized to reward innovative solutions by DIPP recognized Start-ups in the country. Unique solutions were received from start-ups who had also filed for intellectual property rights.
- **Background:** About Swachhata Pakhwada – It was started in April 2016 with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.
- **An annual calendar** is pre-circulated among the Ministries to help them plan for the Pakhwada activities. They are monitored closely using online monitoring system of Swachhata Samiksha where action plans, images, videos related to Swachhata activities are uploaded and shared.
- **After the observation**, Ministries/Departments announce their achievements through a press conference and other communication tools. For the Pakhwada fortnight, observing ministries are considered as Swachhata Ministries and are expected to bring qualitative Swachhata improvements in their jurisdictions.

Year End Review – 2018: Ministry of Tourism

- **Tourism Statistics:** Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during January – November 2018 were 93,67,424 as compared to 88,67,963 in January – November 2017 (5.6% growth). During January – November 2018, 20,61,511 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 14,56,615 during January – November 2017 (41.5% growth).
- **Foreign Exchange Earnings** (FEEs) during January – October 2018 were Rs. 1,58,846 Crore as compared to Rs. 1,41,965 Crore in January – October 2017 (11.9% growth). During 2017, the number of Domestic Tourist Visits to the States/UTs was 1652.5 million as compared as 1615.4 million in 2016, showing growth of 2.3% in 2017 over 2016.
- **Development of Tourism Infrastructure:** Under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, seven projects have been sanctioned during 2018-19. Integrated development of identified pilgrimage destinations is being undertaken under the 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive' (PRASHAD) Scheme. Ministry of Tourism provided Central Financial Assistance for infrastructure development during 2018-19 to Cochin Port Trust and Mormugaon Port Trust.

- **'ADOPT A HERITAGE' Project:** Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) launched a "Adopt a Heritage Project". Objective – To provide world class facilities at the various natural/cultural heritage sites, monuments and other tourist sites. The project plans to entrust to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of various tourist amenities.
- **MoUs have been signed at the following sites:** Area surrounding Gangotri Temple & Trail to Gaumukh, Uttarakhand Stok Kangri Trek, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir Red Fort, New Delhi Gandikota Fort, Andhra Pradesh Surajkund, Haryana Jantar Mantar, Delhi Qutub Minar, Delhi Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra Let Palace, Jammu & Kashmir Hampi (Hazara Rama Temple), Karnataka
- **Online Learning Management System:** Ministry of Tourism launched an Online Learning Management System for creating skilled manpower to work as tourist facilitators. Objective – to enable the youth living in remotest part to skill themselves and facilitate tourists on Pan India basis.
- **Incredible India Mobile App:** Ministry of Tourism launched Incredible India Mobile App on 27th September, 2018 to showcase India as a holistic destination, revolving around major experiences, like spirituality, heritage, adventure, culture, yoga, wellness and more. The app has been equipped with features to assist the traveler in each phase of their journey to India.
- **Legacy Vintage Hotel:** Ministry of Tourism has introduced the concept of Legacy Vintage Hotels to cover hotels constructed/built with materials from heritage properties/buildings (i.e. properties or buildings which were built/constructed/erected prior to the year 1950). Such hotels will help recreate the ambience and atmosphere of the bygone era.
- **Indian Culinary Institute (ICI), Noida Campus:** The Indian Culinary Institute (ICI), Noida campus was inaugurated on 27th April, 2018 for starting culinary courses. The campus also has an "Indian Culinary Museum" where the rich historical and diversified culinary objects and other literature will be displayed.
- **Objective –** The main objective of ICI is to institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve, document, promote and disseminate information about Indian Cuisine, meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine, as also to promote 'Cuisine' as a Niche Tourism product.

Avangard system:

- **Avangard system:** Context: Starting from next year, in 2019, a new intercontinental strategic system Avangard will enter service in the Russian army and the first regiment in the Strategic Missile Troops will be deployed.
- **About Avangard system:** Avangard, also known as "Objekt 4202," is a hypersonic boost-glide missile system that is supposed to combine a high-performance ballistic missile with an unmanned glider vehicle for significant improvements in maneuverability and sustained top speed.
- **Bahuda rookery:** Context: The Odisha forest department is all set to add another olive ridley mass nesting site to its wildlife map- at Bahuda rookery. Around 3-km stretch of the beach from Sunapur to Anantpur at Bahuda rookery is being developed as a possible olive ridley mass nesting site. Location: The Bahuda rookery is located around 20 km to the south of Rushikulya rookery coast, a major mass nesting site of olive ridleys on the Indian coastline.
- **Key facts:** Also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, Olive turtles are a medium-sized species of sea turtle found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. They are best known for their behavior of synchronized nesting in mass numbers. The Convention on Migratory Species and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles have also provided olive ridleys with protection, leading to increased conservation and management for this marine turtle. It is included in Vulnerable category by the IUCN Red list.
- **Mount Etna:** Context: Italy's Mount Etna volcano has erupted again resulting in more than 130 earthquakes of up to 4.3 in magnitude.
- **About Mt. Etna:** Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and one of the world's most frequently erupting volcanoes. It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption. Located near the east coast of the island of Sicily in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet tall.
- **The mountain's largest feature** is the Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox), a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope. Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.
- **In June 2013**, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations.



Year End Review 2018 - Department of Sports (Ministry Of Youth Affairs & Sports)

- **The year 2018** has turned out to be the landmark for India in terms of achievements in Sports arena. Government's two pronged approach to sports – nurture topsports talent and find untapped sports stars at the grassroots, has yielded positive outcome. India recorded its best ever performance this year in the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games with 66 Medals, Jakarta Asian Games with 69 Medals and Para Asian Games with 72 Medals. The achievements of Department of Sports during the year 2018 are as under:-
- **Khelo India School Games (KISG), 2018:** 1st Khelo India School Games, 2018 were held between 31st January to 8th February, 2018 3507 Players from 29 States and 7 Union Territories participated. Medal Tally- 199 Gold + 199 Silver +275 Bronze medals Biggest State contingents: Maharashtra- 331 players Haryana – 388 players Delhi – 359 players Support staff at KISG : 875 Coaches, 578 Managers Technical conduct by 578 nationally and internationally certified Technical Officials. Accommodation provided in various Hotels through M/s. Thomas Cook International: 868 number of Volunteers participated Approximately 550 Talents is to be identified during the Talent Identification process.
- **Overall championship Results:** Haryana – 38 Gold, 26 Silver 38 Bronze: Total: 102 Medals Maharashtra - 38 Gold, 26 Silver 38 Bronze: Total: 111 Medals c. Delhi - 38 Gold, 26 Silver 38 Bronze: Total: 94 Medals

Major Achievements in Khelo India School Games, 2018:

- **1178 sports talents** have been identified & they will be imparted training for next 8 years with annual expenditure on each athlete of Rs. 5 lakh. In Swimming, Srihari Natraj from Karnataka won 6 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal. He broke Senior National 100 Mtr Backstroke record in KISG 2018. His previous time was 57.20 seconds and he gave 56.90 in KISG. He qualified for Asian age group and Youth Olympic Games.
- **In Shooting**, Manu Bhaker from Haryana with the score of 387 achieved the new National record Air Pistol Women Qualification round. In the finals also, Manu Bhaker with the score of 241.1 broke her own National record, achieved in Kerala, 2017. She is also quota winner of Youth Olympic Games, 2018.
- **In Athletics**, Abhishek Singh of U.P won the Gold in Shotput with a throw of 18.73 m and was declared the best Boy athlete. In 100 m hurdles, Aparna Roy of Kerala secured the Gold medal with a timing of 14.02 sec and was declared the best Girl athlete.
- **3. Republic Day Parade Tableau of the Ministry adjudged best among all Ministries:** · Tableau of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports for Republic Day 2018 was adjudged the best Tableau among all the Tableaux of the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India. In a ceremony in New Delhi on 28th January, Secretary (Sports) received the Trophy and Certificate for best Tableau from Hon'ble Raksha Mantri. Theme of the Tableau of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports was Khelo India.

Contribution of Rs. 10 crores to National Sports Development Fund (NSDF):

- **India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL)** made contribution of Rs.10.00 Crore to the NSDF. This was the third installment of contribution made by the IIFCL making the total contribution Rs 30.00 Crore. The IIFCL contribution is being utilized for promotion of sports in the disciplines Badminton, Archery and Para Sports by way of support to sportspersons in these disciplines for their customized training and other services and setting up of Academies/Support to Academies in these disciplines.
- **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)** was established with the objective of promotion of excellence in sports through support to top level sportspersons who are medal prospects in Olympics and other major international competitions and creation of sports infrastructure in priority disciplines etc. The Fund accepts contributions from private/public corporate sectors, other legal bodies like Trusts/Societies, individuals etc.

- **Performance in Commonwealth Games, 2018:** India competed at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast, Australia from 4 to 15 April 2018. It was India's 18th appearance at the Commonwealth Games. With 26 Gold medals and a total of 66 medals (26 Gold, 20 Silver and 20 Bronze), India finished 3rd for the tournament. It was India's best position since the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Gradation of LNIPE as Category-I Deemed to be University by UGC:

- **University Grants Commission** has recently graded the Lakshmbai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior in the highest category i.e. Category-I Deemed to be University as per the provisions of the UGC [Categorization of Universities (Only) for Grant of Graded Autonomy] Regulations, 2018 vide its letter dated 19.06.2018. Prior to it, this Institute has been accredited as A++ by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and awarded with the "Excellent Institute of Physical Education in India" during 11th National Education Summit 2017 and 2nd National Higher Education Summit for Skill Development held at VigyanBhawan, New Delhi.
- **Revised Guidelines for MaulanaAbulKalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy:** With a view to rationalize and simplify the selection of top performing university in sports for award of MaulanaAbulKalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy, the Union Sports Minister approved the revised guidelines for MAKA Trophy on 8.6.2018. Under the revised guidelines, the applications from the universities, which were hitherto used to be invited and scrutinized by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), will be invited by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports/Sports Authority of India. Scrutiny of applications will also be done by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports/Sports Authority of India. Criteria for calculation of marks for selection of universities for MAKA Trophy has been revised. Tournaments which are held more than once a year will not be considered for computation of marks. The amount of award money for the overall all winner university has been enhanced from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 15 lakh and for 1st Runner-up and 2nd Runner-up universities, the amount of award money has been enhanced from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 7.5 lakh and Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 4.5 lakh respectively.
- **Revision of Pension to Meritorious Sportspersons:** In a major step for the welfare of Sportspersons, the Union Sports Minister approved the upward revision of pension to meritorious Sportspersons on 7.6.2018. Under the revision, the rate of pension has been doubled of the existing rate of pension on winning medals in international sports events. The new rates of pension range from minimum of Rs. 12,000/- to maximum of Rs. 20,000/- per month. The rate of pension of medal winners in the Para-Olympics Games and Para Asian Games will be at par with the medal winners in the Olympic Games and Asian Games respectively. The revision in rate of pension will be effective from 1st April 2018.
- **Scholarship programme under Khelo India:** Following the successful conduct of the Khelo India School Games, the Department of Sports took another significant step towards the development of sports on 22.7.2018 and cleared 1178 players for a scholarship programme under Khelo India Talent Identification Development scheme. The scholarship programme is designed to take care of their expenses including training, development, boarding and lodging and tournament exposure apart from offering them out of pocket expense allowance. Under this programme, an annual stipend of Rs. 1.2 lakhs will be given to the players on a quarterly to meet their out of pocket expenses, treating injuries and even smaller but very important elements like local travel for themselves and their parents/ family members.
- **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA):** the beginning of the year, NADA put its efforts during the 1st Khelo India School Games, Delhi so that the integrity of sports be maintained and the participating sportspersons may become aware of International Standards for sports integrity and a total 377 dope tests were conducted by NADA to make the school games dope free. In the run up to the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games held in mid 2018, NADA tested as many as 498 Indian Athletes prior to Asian Games, which was the largest testing conducted by NADA before any international games. Out of these, 54 Indian athletes who were training abroad in preparation for the Asian Games, were got tested by NADA in various countries including Czech Republic, Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Thailand and Bhutan. To monitor the Code Compliance activities, World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) audit team audited anti doping program of NADA, India last year. Followed by Corrective Action Report recommended by audit team of WADA, NADA, India has implemented the corrective action in various areas and maintains its Code Compliance. As per the annual statistics report published by World Anti Doping Agency (WADA), the number of anti doping rule violation in India has come down. Such decrease in the number of doping incidence brought India from 3rd to 6th place globally.
- **National Sports University, Manipur:** The National Sports University Bill, 2018, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 10.08.2017, for establishing a National Sports University in Manipur as part of a vision to enhance country's standing in sports, was passed by both Houses of Parliament during the Monsoon Session, 2018. After receiving the assent of the President, the National Sports University Act, 2018 was published in the Gazette of India on the 17th August, 2018.
- **National Sports University** in Manipur will be first of its kind to promote sports education in the areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management and sports coaching besides functioning as the national training centre for select sports disciplines by adopting best international practices.
- **The University** will impart Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programmes in Sports Coaching, Sports Sciences and physical Education in various disciplines. Specialised degree programmes in various sports education and coaching disciplines are envisaged in the future.
- **Hon'ble Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the National Sports University in Imphal on 16.3.2018.** National Sports University has started functioning from a temporary campus in KhumanLampak Sports Complex, Imphal. First academic session started with Bachelor of Physical Education and Sports (BPES) and B.Sc. (Sports Coaching) Courses with effect from 15.01.2018.
- **Admission to academic session 2018-19** have also been completed. Apart from BPES and B.Sc. (Sports Coaching), one new post graduate courses viz., MA (Sports Psychology) has been introduced.
- **National Sports & Adventure Awards 2018:** President of India Shri Ram NathKovind on 25th September, 2018 conferred National Sports & Adventure Awards 2018 in a ceremony held at RashtrapatiBhawan.

- **In National Sports Awards category**, the most prestigious Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna was conferred to S. MirabaiChanu (Weightlifting) and ViratKohli (Cricket) while Dronacharya Award, Arjuna Award and Dhyan Chand Award were conferred to 32 sportspersons/coaches in various disciplines.
- **Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award** was conferred to 10 persons in categories of Land Adventure, Water Adventure and one (1) award to Life Time Achievement category. MaulanaAbulKalam Azad Trophy was conferred to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.
- **Rashtriya Khel ProtsahanPuruskar** was conferred to three (3) entities namely Rashtriyaspat Nigam Limited in Identification and Nurturing of Budding & Young Talent category, JSW Steel in Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility and Isha Foundation in category of Sports for Development.
- **Financial support to Indian Kho Kho team for participation in International Championship:** Union Sports Minister approved the participation of Kho Kho team from India at the First International Kho Kho Championship in England from 1st to 4th September, 2018, with financial support from the Government of India. The approval was given for the first time in relaxation of extant guidelines of the Ministry which, inter-alia, lay down that sports disciplines like Kho Kho, which are categorised as "Others", will not be eligible for financial support for participation in International sporting events.
- **Commendable performance by Indian Sportspersons in Asian Games, 2018, and Para Asian Games, 2018:** Indian sportspersons and teams put a very commendable performance in Asian Games 2018 held at Jakarta and Palembang (Indonesia) from 18th August to 2nd September, 2018. India won 69 medals (15 Gold, 24 Silver and 30 Bronze) and was placed at 8th position in medals tally.
- **Hon'ble Prime Minister** felicitated the medal winners of Asian Games 2018 on 5th September, 2018.
- **In a separate function** organized by the Ministry to felicitate medal winners of Asian Games 2018 on 4th September, 2018, the medal winning sportspersons were also given cash awards. The gold medal winners were given Rs. 30 lakh Silver medalistsRs. 20 lakh and bronze medalistsRs. 10 lakh.
- **India finished overall 9th in the medals** tally with 72 medals (15 Gold, 24 Silver and 33 Bronze medals) the highest ever by India at an Asian Para Game (APG), outdoing the previous best by a huge margin.
- **Youth Olympic Games:** India finished overall 14th in the medals tally with 13 medals (3 Gold, 9 Silver and 1 Bronze medals) the highest ever by India at Youth Olympic Game (YOG), in Buenos Aires, Argentina, outdoing the previous best.
- **Financial Assistance to Sportspersons:** The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is operating PanditDeendayalUpadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons (PDUNWFS) with a view to assisting outstanding sportspersons of the past, living in indigent circumstances, who had brought glory to the country in sports.

2018 AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships:

- **The 2018 AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships** was held at KD Jadav Indoor Stadium at New Delhi, India during November 15-24, 2018. In the finals of the light flyweight category Mary Kom of India beat Ukrainian boxer Hana Okhota to win the gold, creating history by becoming the first woman boxer to win six gold medals in the AIBA World Boxing Championships. India stood 3rd in the medal tally with one gold, one silver and two bronze.
- **Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management in Sports:** In order to strengthen the overall sports ecosystem in the country and to develop expertise in various sectors, this Ministry has funded and guided Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Rohtak to commence a 2-year course. This Post-Graduate Diploma in Business Management in Sports from academic year 2018-19 at par with other Business Management courses of the Institute has already started.
- **Support to Universities and Medical Colleges under NCSSR scheme** A scheme of National Centre of Sports Sciences and Research (NCSSR) which aims to support high level research, education and innovation with respect to high performance of elite athletes has been started. The scheme has two components: One is setting up of NCSSR at NIS, Patiala, and other is focused on creation of support to Sports Sciences Department in select Universities and Sports Medicine Departments in select Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals. MYAS would fund Rs.25 crore to selected Universities and Rs.12.5 crore to selected Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals over a period of 5 years and later they would become self-reliant.
- **The Sports Medicine Departments** of the Medical Colleges will offer post MBBS degree i.e. MD in Sports Medicine and Diploma in Sports Medicine. The Sports Science Department of the universities will offer degrees such as M. Sc. in Sports Physiology, Sports Biochemistry, Sports Nutrition, Sports Biomechanics, Sports Training Methods; MPT in Sports; M.A in Sports Psychology; and Certificate Course in Sports Anthropometry.
- **In connection** with second component of the scheme, following 6 Universities and 6 Medical Colleges/ Institutes/ Hospitals have been selected in different parts of the country for setting up Departments of Sports Science and Sports Medicine therein respectively. List of Universities/Institutions selected for funding to support Sports Sciences department: (i) Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (ii) Lakshmbai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior (iii) National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad (iv) Annamalai University, Tamilnadu (v) Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer, Rajasthan and (vi) University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal.

- **List of Universities/Hospitals/Medical Colleges** selected for funding to support Sports Medicine department: (i) King George Medical university, Lucknow (ii) VardhmanMahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi (iii) Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma University of Health Sciences, Rohtak, Haryana (iv) Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Bengaluru, Karnataka (v) KEM Hospital and Seth G S Medical College, Mumbai and (vi) Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal.
- **Scheme of Special (Cash) Awards** to Medal Winners in International Sports Events and their Coaches: Rs. 11.02 cr. has been given to winning sportspersons under this scheme during 2018-19 so far.

'Adopt a Heritage' project

- **The five iconic sites are as follows:** Rajasthan – Amer Fort. Assam – Kaziranga. Goa – Colva Beach. Kerala – Kumarakom. Bihar – Mahabodhi Temple.
- **Significance:** The shortlisted agencies would become 'Monument Mitras' through the innovative concept of 'Vision Bidding', which will give them the opportunity to associate their CSR activities with a heritage site if the Vision Bid is selected.
- **Adopt a Heritage Project:** What is it? The 'Adopt a Heritage Scheme' of Ministry of Tourism was launched on World Tourism Day i.e. 27th September, 2017. This project is a key initiative of Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archeological Survey of India (ASI), to develop the heritage sites / monuments and making them tourist-friendly to enhance the tourism potential and their cultural importance in a planned and phased manner.
- **How it works?** The project plans to entrust heritage sites/monuments and other tourist sites to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of tourist amenities. The project aims to develop synergy among all partners.
- **Monument Mitras:** Successful bidders selected for adopting heritage sites / monuments by the Oversight and Vision Committee shall be called as Monument Mitras. The basic and advanced amenities of the tourist destinations would be provided by them. They would also look after the operations and the maintenance of the amenities. The 'Monument Mitras' would associate pride with their CSR activities.
- **Significance of this project:** Adopt a Heritage project is meant to address the challenges that the Archaeological Survey of India and other government bodies are facing in operating tourism infrastructure at heritage sites. By allowing private players to build, operate and maintain "tourist-friendly" and "world class amenities at these sites, the expectation is that the project will boost domestic and international tourism.

Triple Talaq Bill 2018

- **The Bill** makes instant triple talaq void and illegal. It seeks to make the practice of instant triple talaq a punishable offence with imprisonment of up to three years.
- **What's the issue all about- A brief history:** The case dates back to 2016 when the Supreme Court had sought assistance from the then Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi on pleas challenging the constitutional validity of "triple talaq", "nikah halala" and "polygamy", to assess whether Muslim women face gender discrimination in cases of divorce.
- **Opposing the practice** of triple talaq, the Centre told the top court that there is a need to re-look at these practices on grounds of gender equality and secularism. The Supreme Court later announced the setting up of a five-judge constitutional bench to hear and deliberate on the challenges against the practice of 'triple talaq, nikah halala' and polygamy.
- **The issue gained** political momentum on March 2017 when the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) told the Supreme Court that the issue of triple talaq falls outside the judiciary's realm and that these issues should not be touched by the court. However, on August 22 this year, the Supreme Court set aside the decade-old practice of instant triple talaq saying it was violative of Article 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- **A Bill in this regard:** In September, the government had proposed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill in the Parliament and sought to make triple talaq a punishable offence under the law. At first, the Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha but it failed to secure a majority in the Rajya Sabha. The Bill was postponed till the winter session of Parliament. Following this, an ordinance was issued by the government after the bill failed to get cleared in Rajya Sabha amid protests by the Opposition.
- **Key provisions of the Bill:** The Bill makes all declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal.

- **Definition:** It defines talaq as talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- **Offence and penalty:** The Bill makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years' imprisonment with a fine. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.) The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- **The Bill provides** that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.
- **The offence may be** compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Allowance: A Muslim woman** against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Custody: A Muslim woman** against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Significance:** Time has come to put an end to the suffering of Muslim women who have been at the receiving end of instant talaq for several years. More than 20 Islamic countries have already banned the practice.

National Register of Citizens (NRC)

- **The decision** was taken as the exercise to enumerate citizens in the NRC, a list of Assam's residents, could not be completed within the specified date of December 31, 2018.
- **Background:** On December 6, 2013, the government issued the first notification setting a deadline of three years for completion of the entire NRC process. Since then, five extensions have been given by the government. The draft NRC was published on July 30 and included the names of 2.9 crore people of the total 3.29 crore applicants.
- **Why is NRC being updated in Assam?** Officially, the NRC process will address the issue of illegal migrants, specifically from Bangladesh. The National Register of Citizens was first published in 1951 to record citizens, their houses and holdings. Updating the NRC to root out foreigners was a demand during the Assam Agitation (1979-1985).
- **Why is March 24, 1971 the cut-off date?** There have been several waves of migration to Assam from Bangladesh, but the biggest was in March 1971 when the Pakistan army crackdown forced many to flee to India. The Assam Accord of 1985 that ended the six-year anti-foreigners' agitation decided upon the midnight of March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date.
- **Who is a citizen in Assam?** The Citizenship Act of 1955 was amended after the Assam Accord for all Indian-origin people who came from Bangladesh before January 1, 1966 to be deemed as citizens. Those who came between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971 were eligible for citizenship after registering and living in the State for 10 years while those entering after March 25, 1971, were to be deported.

Children's Science Congress

- **Theme:** "Science, Technology and Innovation for a Clean, Green and Healthy Nation."
- **National Children's Science Congress (NCSC):** National Children's Science Congress (NCSC) is a nationwide Science Communication programme started in the year 1993. It is a programme of National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi.
- **It is a forum** children of the age-group of 10-17 years, both from formal school system as well as from out of school, to exhibit their creativity and innovativeness and more particularly their ability to solve a societal problem experienced locally using by method of science.

- **About National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC):** It is mandated to communicate science & technology to masses. The programmes of the Council aim at building capacity for informed decision making in the community.
- **NCSTC encourages** research in areas of S & T communication, training of communicators, development of books, manuals, posters, exhibitions, films, radio programmes, and television programmes on different facets of science & technology and recognizing outstanding efforts through awards and incentives all over the country.
- **It is a registered** body guided by a Board of Governors with headquarters at Delhi. It has about eighty members spread in all states and union territories. Volunteers in districts lend it great strength and capability for implementing projects that reach the common man and woman.

Establishment of NIMZs

- **National Investment & Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs)** are one of the important instruments of National Manufacturing Policy, 2011. NIMZs are envisaged as large areas of developed land with the requisite eco-system for promoting world class manufacturing activity.
- **Objective of Special Economic Zones** – To promote exports, while NIMZs are based on the principle of industrial growth in partnership with States and focuses on manufacturing growth and employment generation. NIMZs are different from SEZs in terms of size, level of infrastructure planning, governance structures related to regulatory procedures, and exit policies.
- **For the Financial Year 2016 – 2017**, Rs. 3.35 crores has been earmarked under the 'Scheme for Implementation of National Manufacturing Policy' for 'Master Planning of NIMZs' and Technology Acquisition and Development Fund (TADF).

Guidelines issued to ensure transparency in Selection of Sportspersons

- **The development** and promotion of various disciplines of sports including selection of players for various national and international sports competitions is the responsibility of the concerned National Sports Federations (NSFs).
- **The NSFs work** in an autonomous environment and the Government is not directly involved in their functioning, including selection of sports persons. To ensure transparency in selection process Government has issued guidelines according to which selection of sportspersons for major international events is to be done by a Selection Committee.
- **Implementing Various Sports Promotional Schemes:** Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) through Sports Authority of India (SAI) has been implementing various sports promotional schemes to tap sports talent across the country irrespective of their financial status. Under the Schemes – SAI Training Centers (STC), Special Area Games (SAG), sports talents belong to rural, tribal, coastal, hilly and backward areas of the country are selected.
- **The selected trainees** are provided financial support in the form of expert coaches, sports equipment, boarding and lodging, sports kit, competition exposure, educational expenses, medical/insurance and stipend as per the approved scheme norms.
- **Under the Scheme of Assistance** to National Sports Federations, the Government supports the identified sportspersons, including those from weaker sections of society/teams for intensive coaching through national coaching camps, foreign exposures/competitions etc.
- **Customized Training:** Under Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), customized training is being provided to identify sportspersons at the state-of-the-art sports institutes/academies within the country and abroad.
- **Background:** National Sports Federations – National Sports Federations (NSFs) are autonomous bodies registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** – Apex national sports body of India It is established in 1984 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for the development of sports in India.

Dwijing Festival:

- **Context:** Dwijing Festival, an annual river festival, has begun on the bank of River Aie in Assam.
- **About Dwijing Festival:** Dwijing Festival is an annual river festival celebrated in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) region of Assam. The festival provides a platform of earning for the people in the region by putting in to focus the business activities for the better economy generation through rural tourism. The festival also aims to provide help to the flood victim families through charity generation and distribution.
- **About River Aie:** River Aie originates from the Himalayan Mountains of Bhutan and flows through the Chirang and Bongaigaon districts of Assam before joining the river Brahmaputra.

Public Enterprises Survey 2017-18:

- **Context:** Public Enterprises Survey 2017-18 has been tabled in the Parliament. The survey mapped the performance of central public sector units.
- **Highlights:** Indian Oil Corporation, ONGC and NTPC emerged as the top three most profitable PSUs in 2017-18, while BSNL, Air India and MTNL incurred the highest losses for the second consecutive year.
- **Dal lake:** Context: The famous dal lake in Srinagar is frozen. The city recently witnessed the lowest temperature ever in 11 years at minus 7.6 degree.
- **About Dal:** Also known as the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, dal lake, which is the second largest in the state, is integral to tourism and recreation in Kashmir and is named the "Jewel in the crown of Kashmir" or "Srinagar's Jewel". The lake is also an important source for commercial operations in fishing and water plant harvesting.
- **The lake** is part of a natural wetland, including its floating gardens. The floating gardens, known as "Rad" in Kashmiri, blossom with lotus flowers during July and August.
- **The lake** is located in the Zabarwan mountain valley, in the foothills of the Shankracharya hills, which surrounds it on three sides. The lake has four main interconnected basins namely, Hazratbal, Bod dal, Gagribal and Nagin.



Initiatives & Achievements of Ministry of Railways in the year 2018

- **Indian Railways achieved** all- round progress during the year with firm focus on safety and passenger services by leveraging the latest in technology and marshalling the inherent strength of a highly dedicated workforce. Some of the significant achievements of the year are highlighted below.
- **Enhanced Safety** Safety continues to be the foremost priority of Railways and is accorded the greatest consideration. During the current year, MoR launched following four safety drives on all Zonal Railways with a view to preventing accidents and strengthening safety on Indian Railways:-
- **On 13.04.2018**, all zonal railways were advised to launch a one month safety drive particularly focusing on strict observance of shunting practices with compliance of rules/instructions contained in G&SR etc. On 08.05.2018 all zonal railways were advised to launch a 30 days safety drive specially targeting safety at manned/unmanned level crossings. On 19.06.2018 all zonal railways were asked to launch a safety drive to prevent accident due to cyclonic storm, heavy rains, landslides etc. during monsoon season.
- **On 16.10.2018**, zonal Railways were advised to launch a special safety drive for a period of fifteen days with special emphasis on safety of work sites, stacking and handling of railway material near track and maintenance of points & crossings.
- **Some of the significant steps taken to enhance safety are:** Induction of technology for safety improvements – Smart Coach Smart coach with diagnostic system monitor bearing vibrations provides advance information on health of bearing wheel & track. In addition, coach has been provided with wheel slip protection monitoring. Further improvements are being brought about to provide fire safety through fire and smoke detection unit integrated with passenger announcement and information system for emergency evacuation and video analytics with phased detection and unusual occurrence features to further enhance safety and security.
- **On-line Monitoring of Rolling Stock (OMRS)** Implementation of OMRS is the first step towards predictive maintenance for its Rolling Stock. OMRS monitors the health of each rolling stock and identifies the defective bearings and wheels. Real time alarm is generated to take corrective action before the line failure of the rolling stock. OMRS equipment will also trend the condition of bearing when implemented in whole rail network of IR.
- **Complete switchover to LHB:** Indian Railways have decided to completely switch over to manufacture of LHB design main line coaches from 2018-19 onwards. The production of LHB coaches in Production Units has continuously increased over the years Production of LHB coaches from 2004-05 to 2013-14 was 2327 coaches, whereas 5548 coaches were produced from 2014-15 to 2017-18. During 2018-19, it is proposed to manufacture 4016 coaches.
- **As a result of relentless** efforts put in by Railways, consequential train accidents decreased from 104 to 73 during 2017-18 in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year. In the year 2018-19 (from 1st April, 2018 to 30th November, 2018) consequential train accidents decreased further from 51 to 44 in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year. Category-wise break-up of accidents is given in the following table:-

Elimination of Level Crossings

- **3478 unmanned LC gates** have been eliminated during the current year so far. In effect, all unmanned level crossings on broad gauge over Indian Railway have been eliminated except one. This will also be eliminated in the current financial year. Out of 16, total 15 Zonal Railways are now unmanned level crossing free on broad gauge. Accidents on unmanned level crossings have reduced from 20 in 2017-18 to 3 in the current year upto Dec., 2018.
- **New Initiatives In Track Maintenance** Highest ever rail renewal of 4405 km was carried out in 2017-18 and 5,000 km has been planned during the current year with outlay of 11,450 crores. 2812 km has been completed during the current year so far.
- **Exclusive RRSK fund** amounting to Rs 1 lakh crore for safety related works including Track Renewal for a period of 5 years, with Annual Budgetary Outlay of Rs 20,000 crore has been created in 2017.
- **Trial of Ultrasonic Broken Rail Detection System** for detection of Rail/Weld breakage has been started on NR and NCR on 25 km track length each. After successful completion of trials, the system will be utilized over Indian Railway for timely detection of Rail/Weld fractures.
- **GPS based trackers** have been provided to Keymen and Patrolmen to get real time information of any untoward incidents/emergencies to avert derailments.

- **Trials for VHF based** Approaching Train Warning System to pre-warn the Trackmen working on running line, for any approaching train have been completed on five Zonal Railways and instructions have been issued for providing the system on Golden Quadrilateral and its diagonal routes over Indian Railways. This will help in ensuring personal safety of Track Maintainers while working on track.
- **Mechanization of Inspection, Monitoring And Maintenance Of Track** Highest ever sanction of Track Machines : Average sanction of machines per year for complete mechanization has been increased to 117 costing about 1547 cr during 2014-18 compared to 63 nos costing about 560 cr prior to 2014. Highest ever 538 machines costing Rs. 7268 cr were sanctioned in the current year Budget to give fillip to mechanization.

Seven numbers of High Output Integrated Track Machines

- **Seven numbers of High Output** Integrated Track Machines, giving 60% more output in the same duration of effective block hours, were inducted for the first time in Indian Railways Maintenance Fleet. Order for 22 more such machines were placed and for 24 more machines will be placed in the current year to cover entire high density routes. This will result in better utilization of traffic blocks on busy routes for improved safety and economy in machines working for track maintenance.
- **High output BCM (HOBGM)** with double the output of present machine along with stabilizer and ballast regulating system is planned for commissioning by March, 2019 for the first time over IR. This will improve safety and economy in track maintenance along with better utilization of maintenance slots on busy routes.
- **A new 3D state-of-the-art** tamping simulator for practical hands-on training for operating advanced track maintenance machines has been installed and commissioned for the first time at Indian Railway Track Machine Training Centre Allahabad (IRTMTC) for skill development of track machine operator's. This type of advanced technology simulator is now available only in five countries including India. This will result in improved training for better utilization & maintenance of state of art tamping machine.
- **Leveraging technology** for reducing reliance on human interface- Selected best available technology to improve safety by reducing reliance on human interface and efficient allocation of resources. Induction and proliferation of following new technologies have been decided for improved track inspection, maintenance and monitoring.
- **Ground Penetration Radar (GPR)** for monitoring health of track ballast bed (Clear ballast cushion, Caked up ballast & ballast penetration in formation) and to prioritize deep screening of track in place of present practice of periodic screening every 500GMT or 10 Yrs.
- **Axle Box Mounted Accelerometers** on pilot basis in 40 rakes in fastest train on selected high density trunk routes to monitor track requiring urgent attention and generate alerts to maintain organization on daily basis. Track Component Condition Monitoring System with Machine vision is planned to be fixed on 16 LHB based OMS Coaches for intermediate inspection by Zonal Railways to get defect list of track components to reduce reliance on human inspection.
- **Rail Grinding Machines** with complementary Switch Grinding Machines and RIV are planned to cover entire Indian Railway track for maintenance of rails to control fracture due to rolling contact fatigue. It will improve reliability of asset by reduction in fractures. Order for 2 nos. Switch rail Grinding Machine (SRGM) & 2 nos. Rail Inspection Vehicle (RIV) have been placed for the first time on IR.
- **Long Rail Panel Handling:-** State-of-the-art mechanized system for loading/unloading of long rail panels for safe handling of long rail to improve in service performance of rail has been sanctioned. Vehicular USFD (SPURT Cars) to cover entire Indian Railways network for monitoring and identification of propagation of rail/weld defects for improving safety of track has been sanctioned. Laser based Integrated Track Recording Cars with facility of Component Monitoring, Axle box acceleration measurement and Clearance measurement System, to cover entire Indian Railway network has been sanctioned.
- **Make In India** Induction of semi-high speed Train-sets to European standard: ICF took up manufacturing of Semi High Speed (160 Km/h) Self Propelled Train-set with indigenous efforts, termed Train-18, with contemporary features as per global standards. The first trainset has been rolled out by ICF in October 2018 and will shortly be ready for service after testing & trials.
- **ICF shall be making** at least two more such rakes this year. Depending on feedback and requirements target for induction in 2019-20 shall be communicated in due course. 100% indigenization has already been achieved in manufacturing of around 20-25% of total fleet of the track machines such as Utility Vehicles (UTVs), Rail Bound Maintenance Vehicles (RBMVs), Track Laying Equipment (TLE), Rail Threader & Rail-cum-Road Vehicles (RCRVs) over IR.
- **70% of existing fleet** of machines have been manufactured by a world's leading manufacturer with a local content in the range of 20% to 50%. Now the local content is being further increased to minimum 51% to 80% under Make in India Policy. Encouraged by Make in India, one more manufacturing plant by a world's leading manufacturer of track machines is being set up in Gujarat and expected to start production by May/2019.

Technological Development

- **Ø Improvements in AT Welding** technology has been carried out to improve quality of welds for enhancement in safety. Thick Web Switches: Policy decision has been taken to use only Thick Web Switches on IR network. This enhances mobility due to higher permitted speed for loop lines, improves safety and maintainability.
- **Weldable CMS Crossing** : It is planned to provide Weldable CMS Crossings on all important routes on Indian Railways. For the first time, order for manufacturing and supply of about 4000nos.Weldable CMS Crossings has been placed.Instead of importing the finished weldable CMS crossings, the working agency is required to set up requisite infrastructure in the country which besides ensuring transfer of technology will also contribute towards 'Make in India' mission.
- **Advancements in Ultrasonic** Testing of Rails and Welds: Analogue USFD testing machines have been replaced by digital USFD testing machines capable of data logging, saving and transferring testing results to on-line Application TMS and PCs.
- **Bridge Management System:** This Web-enabled IT Application covers all aspects of Bridge Master Data, drawings, photographs, etc. This will be a single IT-based repository for all aspects related to bridges on Indian Railways viz. Master Data, condition, inspections, design drawings, etc.The Application was launched by Minister of Railways on 12th July, 2018. It is being further developed to incorporate various bridge inspections.

Improved Sleepers And Fittings

- **Improvement in Concrete Sleeper:** In order to strengthen track structure, a wider and heavier sleeper has been developed in 2014 which is fit for 25 t axle load at 100 kmph. After successful field trial over five Zonal Railways wider and heavier sleeper has been adopted and approved for full use from FY 2019-20. This is done in a record time of 3 years from drawing board to insertion in field for trial against normal period of 8-10 years.:
- **Web base system for track crossing permission** - A web based system for granting permission of track crossing related to various public utilities i.e. water/sewerage/gas pipeline, OFC Cable etc. has been developed and made operational on Indian Railways since 01.04.2015. This system provides submission of online application and knowing status of the same till permission is granted. This avoids the frequent visits of the user to the Railway Offices for knowing the status of application.
- **To expedite clearance** of track crossing cases, power to accord sanction is delegated to DRM for all the cases.
- **Land Data Management** - A web based application called Land Management Module integrated with Track Management System (TMS) of Indian Railways has been developed, for maintaining centralized land data i.e. details of acquisition/area/usages and land plans of Land Bank of Indian Railways in digitized form. Indian Railways has already completed most of the work related to digitization of land record. Indian Railways have also digitized details of vacant land plots measuring more than one acre .

Infrastructural Development

- **Capacity Augmentation through Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)** Thrust is to commission strategic projects like Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs). Work on both Eastern & Western Dedicated Freight Corridors progressed on full speed during the year culminating in successful trial of freight train over Phulera- Atari section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor & Khurja- Bhadan section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor(EDFC) in August & November 2018 respectively. The trials of Freight trains will be completed on extended sections of Rewari – Madar section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) & Khurja – Bhaupur section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor by the end of the financial year.
- **The Dedicated Freight Corridor** will be fully commissioned in phases by March 2020. Part sections of Western and Eastern DFCs viz 190 km Ateli-Phulera section of WDFC opened on Aug 15, 2018 and 194 km New Khurja – New Bhadan section of EDFC opened on Nov 23, 2018.
- ****During 2017-18, 1862 Km commissioning. (Reduction due to diversion of Rails to Rail Renewal from Safety Consideration)** The progress of Track Renewal in 2016-17 was 2597 TKM, in 2017-18 track renewal was 4405 TKM(Track Kilometres). During 2004-14, average commissioning of 4.1 km per day (1496 km per year). Since 2014-18, average commissioning of 6.53 km per day (2382 km per year). Commissioning of 7.75 km per day in 2015-16 (2828 km). During 2016-17, 2855 km track (7.8 km/day) has been commissioned by introducing passenger services which is highest ever progress.
- **Expenditure:** Average Expenditure per year in New line/Gauge Conversion/Doubling Projects in 2009-14 was Rs 11,527cr. Average Expenditure per year in New line/Gauge Conversion/Doubling Projects in 2014-18 is Rs 24,461 cr. which is 112% higher than average of 2009-2014. Expenditure in first 7 months (upto Oct.'18) is Rs 15,090 cr which is much more than the expenditure of whole year in the past. Further, Budget allotment of Rs 34,835 cr (NL/GC/ DL) has been planned for 2018-19.

- **Doubling/3rd& 4th Line:** In 2009-2014, Only 5970 km of Doubling/3rd& 4th line works were included in the budget. Also, till 2013-14, due to overall limited availability of funds, most of the projects were not progressing satisfactorily. This has resulted into serious traffic constraint and availability of traffic maintenance blocks on existing network, Safety concern etc. Since 2014-15, 14,480 km of Doubling/3rd& 4th line works have been included in the budget.
- **To expedite** these capacity Enhancement Projects, Funds have been arranged through institutional financing. Also, based on physical progress of projects, last mile connectivity projects and projects for decongesting the existing routes, sufficient funds are being allotted to each project. Commissioning:

Railway Development in North East Region

- **The following** are the most noticeable achievements of the last four years in NE Region:
- **Major Works and On-going Projects:** 970 km Gauge Conversion completed in NE region in last 4 years. Thus, all MG sections converted to BG and there is no MG operation in entire North East Region. 353.15 km of New Line/Gauge Conversion/Doubling commissioned per year during the period 2014-15 to 2017-18 as against on average of 110 km commissioning per year in NE Region in period from 2009 to 2014. 15 New lines projects of 1,397 km length having a total cost of Rs. 47,695 crore are in different stages of Planning/Sanction/Execution which fall partly or fully in the NE states.
- **6 Doubling projects of 482 km** length having a total cost of Rs. 9,305 crore are in different stages of Planning/Sanction/Execution which fall partly or fully in the states of NE Region. Connectivity to North Eastern States: The Seven Sister States of North Eastern India (Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh) have been connected by Rail Network.
- **Meghalaya came on the rail map** with the flagging off the first ever train from Guwahati to Mendipathar in Meghalaya on 29.11.2014 by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sh Narendra Modi. Tripura has been put on broad gauge railway map. On July 31, 2016, the then Railway Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu flagged off the Agartala-New Delhi 'Tripura Sundari Express'.
- **The Agartala-New Delhi Rajdhani Express** was launched on October 28, 2017. It trudges the longest route (2,422 km) for any Rajdhani Express in service. Jiribam, the first railway station in Manipur was connected by broad gauge line. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sh Narendra Modi flagged off the first passenger train service to Jiribam on May 27, 2016. The passenger train service to Bhairabi in Mizoram was also flagged off by him. Lumding – Silchar Broad Gauge section inaugurated after Gauge Conversion on November 20th, 2015, giving seamless BG connectivity to Barak Valley of Assam.

Connectivity to State Capitals:

- **As per Indian Railways'** vision for North East region, all eight North East state capitals are to be linked with broad gauge rail link by 2020-21. Previously, only Guwahati had broad gauge railway linkage. Further, Arunachal Pradesh & Tripura State capital has been connected.
- **Marvels of Railway Engineering:** Jiribam – Tupul - Imphal New line Project : India's tallest bridge with pier height of 141 m is being constructed on Irang River at Noney in Tamenglong district, Manipur as part of the Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal new line project. Its height will be almost equal to two QutubMinars combined. There will be six tall bridges having pier height more than 70m in the Bhairabi-Sairang new line Project (51.3 km).
- **Mega Projects (Commissioning of Bogibeel Bridge):** It is longest Rail-cum-Road Bridge of India.(4.94 Km long Bridge) Across River Brahmaputra near Dibrugarh in the State of Assam Dedicated to the Nation by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi Ji on 25th December, 2018. Double line track with 3 lane Road and 74 km of total Railway track This Project was sanctioned in 1997-98 at a cost of Rs.1000 crore and the work was commenced in April, 2002 by Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, the then Prime Minister of India.
- **The completion cost of the project is Rs.5820 crore (approx.).** DEMU services were introduced in Tinsukia Division of NF Railway in 2016-17. New coaching depots have become functional at Silchar in Barak valley region of Assam and at Agartala in Tripura. These measures have provided better connectivity to the isolated region of North East. The following projects have also been sanctioned for the North East region: Workshop for refurbishing of LHB coaches at New Bongaigaon at the cost of Rs 90 Crore, sanctioned in the year 2017-18. Tender awarded, ready to start shortly.
- **Provision of Diesel Electric Multiple Unit / Mainline Electrical Multiple Unit Shed** at Lumding at the Cost of Ra. 73.67 Crore, included in Pink Book 2018-19. Tender awarded, ready to start shortly.

Station Beautification

- **Indian Railways** has launched an innovative initiative for the station beautification with wall art of paints and graffiti or local arts with participation of local artists, private groups and volunteers. 65 stations across Zonal railways have been beautified under this initiative by utilizing skills of local artists, mostly using local art form, painting style, local themes or contemporary arts. This initiative provided forum for expression of the emerging talents in the area and visibility of local art forms to the travellers. Balharshah & Chandrapur Railway stations (Central Railway) Madhubani Railway station (East Central Railway) & Madurai Railway station (Southern Railway) Gandhidham Railway station (Western Railway), Kota Railway station (West Central Railway) & Secunderabad Railway station (South Central Railway) etc. have been beautified.
- **Indian Railways** has also commenced work on soft upgradation of 68 stations . This is targeted to be completed by 31st March, 2019. This initiative is to give substantial improvement to various passenger amenities like traffic circulation, inter platform transfer, waiting halls, facade improvement, lighting and accessible stations to Divyangjan.
- **Initiatives for Station Redevelopment over Indian Railways** The Cabinet approved on 03.10.2018, for redevelopment of Railway Stations, through simplified procedures adopting various business model, commercial as well as residential development at railway stations and for longer lease tenure upto 99 years. Indian Railways Station Development Corporation (IRSDC) has been entrusted with all the stations to conduct techno-financial feasibility studies and prepare the business plan. Four stations are under progress i.e. Habibganj(Bhopal), Gandhinagar, Lucknow (Charbagh), Lucknow Gomtinagar. Habibganj and Gandhinagar are targeted to be completed by Feb 2019.
- **Improved Passenger Services** Indian Railways has introduced the following new Modern Trains/Coaches : Humsafar Trains: Humsafar trains having additional amenities in the coaches have recently been introduced for providing comfortable Air-Conditioned III Tier travel. So far 29 Humsafar rakes (9 rakes in 2016-17, 10 rakes in 2017-18, 10 rakes in 2018-19 upto 30.11.18) have been turned out by the Production Units.
- **Following major features have been introduced:-** GPS based Passenger information system, Passenger announcement system, Dust bins in each bay, Coffee vending m/c, Improved aesthetics pleasing colour scheme, Passenger announcement System, Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) based surveillance system, Integrated Braille displays etc.
- **Antodaya trains:** Long distance fully unreserved train, LHB general second class coaches with vestibules, cushioned luggage racks, additional hand hold in doorway area for the comfort of standing passengers, provision of J hooks near longitudinal luggage racks for hanging carry bags, enhanced number of mobile charging points, Fire extinguishers with anti-theft arrangement, more pleasing colour scheme for interior and exteriors, provision of MU cable in each coach for running train service with loco at both ends. So far, 15 Antodaya rakes (3 rakes in 2016-17, 10 rakes in 2017-18 and 3 rakes in 2018-19 upto 30.11.18) have been turned out by Production Units.
- **Deen Dayalu Coaches:** Main additional features of Deendayalu coaches are -Cushioned luggage racks, Additional hand hold in doorway area, provision of J hooks for hanging carry bags, Toilet occupation indication display board, Enhanced mobile charging facility, Fire extinguishers with anti-theft arrangement, Water level indicator, Pleasing Interiors, Improved exterior colour scheme with anti-graffiti coating, polymerized floor coating in toilets. So far more than 1100 Deen Dayalu coaches have been turned out by Production Units.
- **Tejas trains:** One Mumbai CST-Karmali Tejas train is plying between Mumbai CSTM to Karmali/Goa has been started on 24.05.2017. Two more Tejas rakes have been turned out of the PUs in the current year. These Ultra modern trains with speed potential of 200 kmph have following major distinguished features: Automatic entrance doors, Passengers Information display system (Electronic Reservation chart System), GPS based Passenger information system, Fire and Smoke detection system, Superior toilet fittings, Sealed vestibules, LED lights, CCTV, Aesthetically pleasing colour scheme.
- **Vistadome Coaches:** These coaches are provided with enhanced viewing area including on roof to enable tourists to enjoy panoramic view while travelling. The feature has been well received. Total of four such coaches are in service on scenic sections.
- **Model Rakes : Model Rakes include following features :** Modular Panels, Superior material for panels, Ergonomically designed ladders, Aesthetically appealing toilet modules, Large size mirrors, Platform washbasin, Controlled discharged water taps, Odour control system, Dustbin inside the toilet, First Model rake named as New Delhi-Varanasi Mahamana Express was started in Jan'16. Bhopal MLR Workshop has turned out more than 120 model rake coaches. ICF has also turned out 24 Model rake coaches. A total of four such rakes are in service on date.
- **Upgradation of coaches:** Project Swarn was started to upgrade the condition of Rajdhani and Shatabdi Express Trains, with the objective of significantly improving the passenger experience across 9 dimensions which include coach interiors, toilets, onboard cleanliness, staff behavior, catering, linen, punctuality, security, on-board entertainment. Real time feedback is also a part of Project Swarn. Under this scheme total 29 trains as targeted have been covered@ Rs. 50 lakh per rake.
- **Project Utkrisht** has been launched to improve condition of 66 important Mail/ Express trains, @Rs. 60 lakhs per rake, consisting of 140 rakes. As a part of this project improvement in coach interior, coach exterior, toilets, lighting and passenger amenity items will be carried out. This is targeted for completion in 2018-19. Phase II of Project Utkrisht has also been sanctioned in which 500 rakes of mail express trains will be upgraded targeted for completion in 2019-20.
- **LED Lights in Coaches:** All CFL/FL lights in all TL/AC and self propelled (EMU/MEMU/DEMU) coaches are being replaced with LED lights which is likely to save electrical energy to the tune of Rs. 19764/- per AC coach per Annum and Rs. 8424/- per non AC coach per annum.

Promotion of Digital Transactions: To promote cashless and digital transactions, Ministry of Railways took the following steps :

- **Installation of Point of Sale (POS)** machines at various Passenger Reservation System (PRS)/Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) booking offices & Parcel and Goods location for acceptance of payment through credit/debit cards. Acceptance of Unified Payments Interface (UPI)/Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) as a payment option for booking of reserved/unreserved tickets. Withdrawal of service charge on online booking of tickets.
- **Withdrawal of service charge** applicable on transactions against credit/debit cards for purchasing journey tickets at PRS/UTS counters. 0.5% discount on season tickets purchased through digital means. 5% discount on reserved counter ticket subject to maximum discount of `50 for tickets of value of `100/- or more for payments made through UPI/BHIM. Provision of 5% of the recharge value as bonus at the time of recharge of R-wallet in case of unreserved ticket booking through mobile phone. Provision of 3% bonus on every recharge of Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVM) card as an incentive for promotion of ticket booking through ATVM.
- **Enhancing Passenger Convenience:** To provide passengers with an elevated level of comfort and a highly satisfying experience, MoR has taken the following steps : Introduction of ticket booking through mobile phone - UTSONMOBILE App for unreserved ticket booking and IRCTC RAIL CONNECT App for reserved ticket booking.
- **Establishment of Yatri Ticket** Suvidha Kendras (YTSK) on public private partnership basis for issuing of tickets. Launch of the Next Generation E-ticketing System (NGeT) for improving accessibility and enhancing the overall experience of e-ticketing. Introduction of Defence Travel System enabling online booking of tickets for defence personnel.
- **Provision of concessional** online ticket booking facility to persons with disabilities and accredited press correspondents. Streamlining of Computerised Passenger Reservation System to facilitate timely preparation of Reservation Charts and transfer of vacant berths to next remote location.
- **Introduction of Alternate** Train Accommodation Scheme known as VIKALP scheme on all trains to provide confirmed accommodation to waitlisted passengers. Provision of SMS alerts facility to passengers in case of change in train running status like cancellation/delay of trains for more than one hour etc. Acceptance of downloaded Aadhaar (e-Aadhaar) & m-Aadhaar also as one of the proof of identity for undertaking journey in any reserved class. The concept of 'Train Captain' as a single person/leader responsible for coordinating the entire team and facilitating all services during the complete journey of the train has been introduced.
- **For the first time**, passenger amenities are being provided at stations on the basis of passenger earnings as well as passenger footfalls. Revised criteria for categorization of stations has been issued on 22.11.2017. The revised criteria aims at providing higher level of amenities at bigger stations, commensurate with the earnings/passengers handled. Revised comprehensive instructions for provision of passenger amenities at various categories of stations has been issued.
- **Foot Over Bridge and High Level** Platforms have been included in minimum essential category for all stations and accordingly all stations over Indian Railways will be provided with FOB and High Level Platforms in a phased manner. Also all new stations shall now be constructed with High Level platforms and Foot Over Bridge at all categories of stations on broad gauge including Halt stations.
- **Complete decentralization** of powers to DRM and Field officer for fixation of Reserve Price for Parking, Pay & Use Toilet, charges for Retiring Rooms/dormitory, Portage charges etc.
- **Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs)** have been empowered to extend the period of contract of physically handicapped PCO booth holders upto ONE year at a time on the basis of satisfactory performance of licensee. Zonal Railways have been advised to provide one wheelchair per platform and in case of island platforms one wheelchair per two platforms at all A-1 and A category stations. General Managers have also been authorised to reduce/increase the number of wheel chairs to be provided at stations based on the passenger traffic handled at the station and assessed requirement of wheel chairs at the stations.
- **Provision of a segregated** area within waiting halls to be known as feeding corner for feeding the babies by lactating mothers. Online booking of Retiring Rooms with the provision of hourly booking. Launch of 'Sarathi Sewa' for provision of Battery Operated Vehicles (BOVs) at stations through publicity route or CSR. Launch of 'Yatri Mitra Sewa' at major stations for booking of wheel chair service cum porter services etc.

Cleanliness

- **Important measures include** : Integrated mechanised cleaning was provided at 488 Railway stations up to March 2018. It is now provided at 697 stations. Independent third party Survey of passenger perception on Cleanliness standards of 407 major railway stations carried out first time in 2016 and repeated in 2017 and 2018.
- **On Board House Keeping Service** (OBHS) is being provided since 2008-09. Starting from 2008-09, OBHS was provided in 416 pairs of trains up to March, 2014. 448 pairs of trains added in 3 years from 2014-15 to 2016-17. Another 139 added in 2017-18 and 65 more in 2018-19. A total of 1068 trains are presently having facility of this service.

- **All Rajdhani, Shatabdi**, Duronto and other important long distance Mail/Express trains are provided with OBHS for cleaning of coach toilets, doorways, aisles and passenger compartments during the run of the trains. Service is supported by sms based on demand "Clean-my-Coach" service in 1059 trains, augmented to "Coach-Mitra", since 2017-18 to cover over 1020 trains presently.
- **Railways are setting up mechanized** laundries for improving quality of washing of linen provided to AC coach passengers. Starting from 2009-10, 25 Mechanized laundries were set up till March, 2014. 32 more mechanised laundries were set up from 2014-15 to 2018-19. Orders for 14 more mechanized laundries with total capacity 81 tonnes per day (TPD) have been placed. Nearly 283 TPD is presently being supplied from mechanised laundries. Target is to cover 100% linen washing requirement by mechanised laundries in next financial year.
- **Automatic Coach Washing Plants** : These not only clean exterior of coaches more effectively and efficiently, they also reduce the direct water requirement by avoiding wastage. In addition these also come with water recycling facility thereby further reducing the requirement. Based on the location feasibility, initially 122 locations have been identified for provision of ACWP. 10 plants have been installed and LOA has been issued for 7 more locations. Zonal Railways are tendering for provision at 31 locations. COFMOW has opened a tender on 17-10-18 for 21 more locations, likely to be finalised by end of December 2018. COFMOW has also floated a tender for Rate Contract for additional 80 locations.
- **Bio-Toilets: As a part of "Swachh Bharat Mission"**, IR is proliferating bio-toilets on all its coaching stock so that no human waste is discharged from coaches on to the track. During 2017-18, against the target of 40000, 57429 bio-toilets have been provided in 15017 coaches, as compared to 10159, 15442 and 34134 bio-toilets in 3374, 3961 and 8788 coaches in last three years.
- **The work** is targeted to be completed next year with provision of bio-toilets in balance approx 13000 coaches.
- **Bio-Vacuum Toilet:** Vacuum flushing system toilets substantially reduce the requirement of water for flushing, while ensuring effective/ proper flushing of faecal matter from the pans. Bio-vacuum toilets have been provided in one train "Tejas" running between Mumbai & Goa. Vacuum toilets are being provided on all newly manufactured Tejas and Humsafar coaches from 2018-19 onwards. Procurement of another 2000 bio-vac toilets is under process. Railways have been instructed to provide Bio-vacuum toilets in coaches of all premium trains to begin with, to ensure proliferation of vacuum toilets at an accelerated pace. PUs shall be providing these in all new production w.e.f 2019-20.

Make in India : Coaches

- **Smart Coach:** MCF has rolled out a smart coach in Sept'18, providing better safety passenger amenities as well as enabling predictive maintenance. Diagnostic system monitor bearing vibrations provide advance information on health of bearing wheel & track. In addition, coach has been provided with wheel slip protection monitoring, water level indicator, Wi-Fi, infotainment system with emergency talk back and passenger announcement and information system alongwith digital destination board.
- **Further improvements** are being brought about to provide and monitor improved air conditioning which will monitor particulate pollution inside the coach along with quantum of fresh air and power consumption. Fire safety through fire and smoke detection unit integrated with passenger announcement and information system for emergency evacuation and video analytics with phased detection and unusual occurrence features would further enhance safety and security.
- **Tender for 150 smart coaches is under finalization. Production is expected to start from January, 2019.** Air conditioned EMU rakes: Prototype full air conditioned EMU rake was introduced in service on 25.12.2017 in Mumbai suburban area. Six more rakes are expected induction during the current year. This will be followed by more such rakes in 2019-20 along with partial air conditioned rakes for the first time in the history of suburban service. It is planned to partially air condition 78 existing EMU rakes of Mumbai suburban. Target for induction of first such rake is later part of 1st quarter of 2019.
- **Three phase MEMU rakes:** Three MEMU rakes equipped with 3 phase IGBT based electrics have been turned out from ICF in July, 2018. These are undergoing prototype test and trial under RDSO. The rakes will be inducted in passenger service after successful completion of trials. The technology is not only energy efficient in traction but also equipped with regenerative braking to save energy during braking.
- **Comparative performance coach manufacturing:** The coach production from production units has been increasing exponentially. Capex on Infrastructure Production Units: The infrastructure spending has increased and therefore also the works getting completed as shown from following table:
- **The increased spending and execution has also given a boost to "Make in India" through following projects:** A new coach manufacturing factory has been sanctioned at Latur in Maharashtra, at an estimated cost of Rs. 492.73 crore. The factory will manufacture 250 MEMU coaches per year, which will replace slow moving conventional passenger trains. Construction work of boundary wall, test shops, ancillary building and track connectivity is under progress.
- **The following projects have been sanctioned for the North East region:** Workshop for refurbishing of LHB coaches at New Bongaigaon at the cost of Rs 90 Crore, sanctioned in the year 2017-18. Tender awarded, ready to start shortly. Provision of Diesel Electric Multiple Unit/Mainline Electrical Multiple Unit Shed at Lumding at the Cost of Ra. 73.67 Crore, included in Pink Book 2018-19. Tender awarded, ready to start shortly.
- **Indian Railways** are also ramping up the production capacities of its coach production units. This will enable Indian Railways to run more trains with safer, more modern and comfortable coaches. A sanction of Rs 486.76 crore has been provided for augmenting the capacity of Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, from 1700 to 2750 coaches per year. Work is under progress. Similarly, a work of Rs. 480 crore has been sanctioned for augmentation of production capacity of MCF Rae Bareli from 1000 to 2000 coaches per annum. Tender is under finalization.

- **Robotics and Industry 4.0 in PU production:** Industry 4.0 is Smart manufacturing based on Cyber Physical system. It includes end-to-end digitization and integration into digital eco-system with all value chain partners interacting seamlessly. System includes- Proactive Production Monitoring, Integrated Maintenance Analytics, WIP Inventory and Manufacturing Analytics Dashboard. Robotics is being used in MCF for manufacturing, who are also implementing Industry 4.0. This would be duplicated over ICF and RCF also.

Railway Electrification

- **During year 2017-18, 4,087 RKM** of BG routes have been commissioned on electric traction against target of 4,000 RKM. During previous (2016-17), achievement on electrification was 1,646 RKM, thereby increase of 148%. For period 2014-18, routes of 8,411 RKM have been commissioned on electric traction against 3,038 RKM commissioned during 2009-14, thereby increase of 177%. For the current financial year (2018-19) target for electrification has been set as 6,000 RKM. Up to 15.12.18, 1,667 RKM has been commissioned on electric traction in 2018-19. Achievement on electrification during corresponding period of 2017-18 was 1,648 RKM.
- **With a view to transforming** Indian Railways into "Green Railways" and to capture the economic benefits of electric traction in an accelerated manner, Indian Railways has planned to electrify balance BG routes by 2021-22. Accordingly, the work for electrification of balance un-electrified BG routes of IR covering 13,675 route kilometers has been approved by CCEA at a cost of Rs.12,134.50 crore. To achieve ambitious target for electrification of balance route, following strategic policy decisions have been taken:
 - **Base of executing agencies have been broadened** and projects covering 1735 RKM have already been entrusted to Govt. PSUs i.e. IRCON, RITES and PGCIL. Timelines and approving authorities for various drawings/schematic/plan approval for RE projects have been re-defined. It has been decided that "Henceforth, where, electrification and doubling works are sanctioned; both works shall be executed by the same agency. Adoption of EPC mode of contraction for larger size projects i.e. 300/500/1000/1500RKM.
 - **Emphasis on mechanized execution of OHE construction works.** Design for Cylindrical cast in-situ and prefabricated foundation developed for expeditious and mechanised execution of foundation works. Anchor bolt type foundation developed in rocky soil to speed up foundation work. OHE design revisited for low density traffic routes; to reduce the cost of electrification and also expedite execution of the work. Diesel Locomotives Works, Varanasi & Diesel Modernization Works, Patiala have been repurposed for manufacturing Electric locomotives and have already manufactured more than 50 electric locomotives by using existing resources & electric supply chain.
 - **Diesel loco sheds** are being progressively repurposed for maintenance of Electric locomotives.

Important Projects

- **Electric Locomotive Factory, Madhepura** in Bihar (A make in India Project): As a first step of attracting private investment and FDI in Indian Railways, contract for setting up Electric Locomotive Factory at Madhepura/Bihar to manufacture 800 nos High Horsepower Electric Locomotive (12000 hp capacity) was signed between Madhepura Electric Locomotive Private Limited (MELPL), joint venture of Ministry of Railways and Alstom Manufacturing India Limited.
- **First phase of the factory** has been completed. First locomotive has been rolled out from the factory and is undergoing tests & trials. Further four locomotives are targeted to be supplied in 2018-19.
- **Diesel Locomotive Factory, Marhowra** in Bihar (A make in India Project): Contract for setting up Diesel Locomotive Factory at Marhowra/Bihar to manufacture 1000 nos High Horsepower Diesel Locomotive (4500/6000 hp capacity) was signed between GE Diesel Locomotive Private Limited (GEDLPL), joint venture of Ministry of Railways and GE Global Sourcing India Limited.
- **Construction of the factory** is ongoing as per schedule. Two Prototype locomotives (4500 hp) were handed over to Indian Railways in February, 2018 by the company. After tests/trials these locomotives have been accepted for commercial service. 50 locomotives have been supplied and out of 50 locomotives 19 are in commercial service. Total 98 locomotives are targeted to be supplied in 2018-19.
- **Electric Locomotives:** New Era of Green Technology- HOG power supply: All Passenger (WAP7) locos turned out by CLW during 2017-18 are fitted with Hotel Load Converters. The main benefits of this system are supply of pollution free and cheaper power from OHE as compared to End on Generation (EOG) system besides other advantages like reduction of carbon emission, noise level and consumption of fossil fuels helping in protecting the environment. There is a saving of around Rs. 1.5 lacs per day per pair of rake by using HOG supply.
- **47 locos have been provided** with HOG during the first nine months of 2018-19 (upto October, 18) as compared to 43 during last year.

- **WAP-5 locomotive in push-pull mode:** Operation of Twin WAP5 loco in push-pull mode has been planned which has faster acceleration, faster braking and substantially lowered coupler forces.
- **One pair of WAP-5 loco** and rake has been modified and Confirmatory Oscillograph Car Runs (CoCR) Trial has been carried out by RDSO from Delhi (NZM) to Mumbai (Bandra Terminal) from 07.10.18 to 13.10.18. During the trials, a saving of 83 minutes running time was recorded.

Upgradation of Electric locomotives:

- **It is planned** to upgrade the existing 6000 HP WAG9H locos to 9000 HP to improve the hauling speeds of freight trains. It's a make in India initiative already started at CLW. First locomotive is expected to be commissioned by Jan'2019. Similarly, it has been decided necessary to upgrade existing WAP-7 locomotives from 6000 HP to 9000 HP to haul 24 coach trains at balancing speed upto 140 kmph. Process of development of High Horse Power Passenger locomotives (9000 hp) has already been initiated by CLW. First locomotive is expected to be commissioned by Mar'2019.
- **Design review** for enhancement of speed from 140 kmph to 160 kmph has been completed and manufacturing process has been initiated at CLW and first locomotive is to be rolled out by January, 2019.
- **Provision of Regenerative braking feature in WAG-7 locomotives:** Conventional Electric locomotives (fitted with DC Traction motor) are provided with Rheostatic braking wherein energy generated during braking is dissipated in dynamic Braking Resistance (DBR) resulting in wastage of energy. Regenerative braking feature in WAG-7 locomotives is being developed and one WAG-7 locomotive no 24571 fitted with re-regenerative converter is under testing. Saving due to regeneration braking would be around Rs 24.6 lakhs per loco per year.
- **Development of Battery cum 25 kV AC operated Shunting Locomotive:** The Battery operated shunter is capable of shunting up to 59 BOXN/5800T train load/24 coach rake from one line to adjacent line at a speed of 10 - 15 kmph on level track. Development has been initiated at CLW & KPA/ER Workshop.
- **Provision of EP Assisted system:** The purpose of EP assisted system is to minimize response time during braking and release, and to make braking simultaneous along the whole length of the train. This helps in reducing braking distance and facilitates quick release of brakes. Procurement action has been initiated at CLW and 20 passenger locomotives will be fitted on trial basis.
- **Conversion of a locomotive from diesel to electric traction:** Indian Railways has created history by first-ever conversion of a locomotive from diesel to electric traction. The conversion of Diesel locomotive into Electric locomotive is a highly specialized and unique work which was not done earlier in traction application worldwide. Two diesel locos (Alco) have been successfully converted to electric and sanction for operation of twin WAGC3 Electric locomotive converted from WDG3A Diesel locomotives has been issued.
- **Diesel HHP** locomotive have also been successfully converted to electric and are under trial.
- **Electric loco production at CLW:** CLW has produced 350 electric locos during the year 2017-18 as against 292 in 2016-17. A new milestone has also been set by CLW in the process by becoming largest loco manufacturer in the world under single roof.
- **Manufacturing of Electric Locomotive at Diesel Modernization Works, Patiala:** In order to cater to the enhanced requirement of electric locomotives commensurate with 100% electrification and to utilize the infrastructure & manpower of DMW, mainly a Diesel loco rehabilitation workshop, DMW was entrusted with the responsibility to manufacture Three Phase IGBT based electric locomotives during current FY 2017-18. With enormous efforts put in by officers and staff, DMW has turned out two electric locomotives during 2017-18. DMW has turned out 21 WAP-7 locomotives during the current year (upto November).

Crew Voice/Video recording system (CVRS):

- **First electric loco no. 32001** fitted with Crew Voice/Video recording system (CVRS) has been commissioned in Dec'2017. The system ensures the effective and temper proof video and voice recording of locomotive cab for post failure event analysis. CVRS is being planned for 20 loco sets at CLW initially.
- **Provision of Simulator:** A work for setting up of simulators amounting Rs. 350 crore for training of running staff for minimizing the accidents has been sanctioned under M&P (Plan head-41) against Pink Book no. 1177 of 2018-19.
- **Diesel Locomotives:** LCAVR (Loco Cab audio video Recording System) – This system provide invaluable data to investigators which helps them in understanding the sequence of events leading up to an accident and for identifying operational issues and human factors, including crew performance. 23 Diesel locomotives have already been equipped with LCAVR while tenders for further 3000 have been floated recently by DMW/PTA against RSP.

- **Distributed Power Control System (DPCS)** - DPCS provides real time communication between lead and remote locos through wireless data radio to synchronize locos. Main advantages of DPCS are increased hauling capacities and reduced crew requirements. DPCS has been fitted in 145 Diesel Locos (HHP-95 and ALCO-50) till date. NFR has started its successful running in critical graded LMG- BPB new BG section. Furthermore ECR has also been running freight train with DPCS which has enhanced wagon turn round and thus has increased mobility.
- **Diesel loco sheds are being progressively repurposed for maintenance of Electric locomotives.** Air Conditioning of Running Rooms - Provision of adequate quality of rest in Running Room and provision of adequate facilities in crew lobby has always been priority of IR. Accordingly, an umbrella work for upgradation of Running Room for Loco Pilots & Guards on IR has been sanctioned under Pink Book 2018-19 at anticipated cost of Rs.225 crs. A Budgetary outlay of Rs. 200 crs. has also been granted and works are in progress over IR.

Energy Efficiency

- **All railway stations** (more than 8000) have been fitted with 100% LED luminaries. 99% of service buildings provided with 100% LED lights over IR. This will save 240 Million Units of electricity per annum amounting to Rs.180 Crores reduction in annual electricity bill of IR. So far, 574 no of escalators and 407 no of lifts have been provided covering 215 stations and 180 stations respectively. So far, 71.19 MW of Solar plants have already been installed (68.19 MW rooftop + 3 MW land based at MCF Raebareli). So far, 36.5 MW Wind power plant has been installed.
- **Open Access** IR is presently drawing about 1100 MW through Open Access, in 10 States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Haryana, Karnataka, Delhi, U.P. and also in Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC). Railway have saved Rs. 1249 Cr. from April'18 to Sept'18. Indian Railways is doing much better than what was targeted in Mission 41K and till Sept' 18, it saved about Rs 8902 Cr. This is more than 16% the proportionate target of Rs7653 Cr, as envisaged in "Mission 41K."
- **Automatic Switched Neutral Section (ASNS)** Successful trials of ASNS have been carried out in the month of Oct'18 (under the supervision of RDSO). This is going to be very important as Indian Railways have decided to run trains at 160 kmph. This will help in reduction of stress to Loco Pilots thereby efficient and safe operation of trains. This will also ruled out any damage to OHE due to Loco Pilots entering neutral section with DJ opening.
- **100% Green Powered station:** Indian Railways' go green and save electricity initiative has proved to be immensely beneficial. Malwal Railway station of Northern Railway under Firozpur Division is the first Green Powered station commissioned in India (Jan'11). It is meeting all its power needs like lighting and fans load from solar power only. Asangaon Railway station of Central Railway under Mumbai Division has been second 100 % Green Powered station powered with windmill & solar panels (March'18).
- **On similar lines,** Guwahati Railway station in the Northeast has become the first Railway station in northeast to run completely on solar power (May'18). Railways are making extensive efforts in this direction to make more and more 100% green powered stations.
- **Important Milestones for the current year** Indian Railways has been consistently trying to improve the illumination levels at various stations. Various policies have been issued from time to time to improve the illumination levels. The last major decision taken in this regard was to switch over to 100% LED on all Railway Stations.
- **As per the direction** of Minister of Railways, Indian Railways has switched over to 100% LED lights stations as on 30.03.2018; a day before the targeted date. This has improved the illumination levels considerably. This was done as Phase-I of the project for improvement in illumination, wherein the existing lights were replaced by LED lights on one is to one basis.
- **PAT: Indian Railway** is continuing on its path towards achieving higher energy efficiency & shall achieve the targets set for it under Govt. of India's Perform Achieve & Trade (PAT) cycle-II and in the next cycle and shall strive for maximizing its gains through earning of more & more energy saving certificates (ESCerts).]
- **Railway is also working** on plans to install solar panels on vacant Railway Lands along the tracks and other land parcels for generating power to meet its Traction energy requirement. This would be done First time in the World.
- **Mission Raftaar** Golden Quadrilateral (GQ) along with diagonals carry approximately 58% of freight traffic and 52% of coaching traffic with a share of only 16% of the network (~10000km) taken up for initial emphasis. Major impediments to mobility have been identified viz. ~70% of the routes having sectional speed of less than 130kmph. 2736 level crossings, averaging one LC at every 3-4km. 730 locations speed restrictions (Average one SR at every ~15-20km). ~10% (~900) turnouts of speed of less than 30kmph. A road map has been developed to overcome the existing impediments in a systematic manner. All but 28 unmanned LCs removed on IR. A speed policy framework has been developed to address this issue of the mismatch between speed potential of rolling stock and fixed infrastructure. It has been decided to upgrade 10000km of Golden Quadrilaterals and diagonals for 160 kmph speed and remaining routes for 130 kmph speed. Some of the important elements of the policy are :
- **Replacement of loco hauled commuter trains with Mainline Electric Multiple Units (MEMU trains:** MEMU trains have a potential for average speed increment of up to 20kmph in comparison to loco driven passenger trains. Busy Ghaziabad- Allahabad – Mughalsarai route has been made free from conventional trains by replacement by MEMU. For replacement of loco hauled commuter trains with MEMU trains on six routes, total 1048 MEMU coaches and 136 DEMU coaches are required. IR has planned to ramp up the production of MEMU rakes to 1232 coaches in next three years (approximately three times existing level) for ensuring full implementation. Total 124 pair passenger services have been replaced by MEMU/DEMU services on Indian Railways. The travel time has been reduced by 5-20 minutes in these services. Delhi- Mumbai, Delhi- Howrah and Mumbai- Chennai will be completed in Yr 2018-19. All routes will be made free from conventional commuter trains by Yr 2021.

- **Right Powering of freight trains:** Over the years Horse Power to trailing load ratio has deteriorated due to longer trailing loads. This has adversely affected average speed of freight trains. New policy introduced for right powering arrangement for freight trains with a horse power to trailing load ratio of 1.5-2.0 to bring it at par with international standards. For eight major railways out of the requirement of 663 additional locomotives, 300 locomotives have been provided.
- **Introduction of Twin Pipe Air Brake System** on freight trains: Twin piped braking system saves on an average ~90 seconds in every event of braking, which becomes significant over a long distance. All new wagons are being manufactured with twin pipe system. Retrofitment of all 1.7lac wagons has been sanctioned. Approximately 11000 wagons have been retrofitted. Procedural Improvements: Policy circular 6 which governs increasing speed of trains has been rationalized. It will enable faster realization of gains from new technology and various speed raising initiatives.
- **Decision has been taken to stop** the manufacture of conventional ICF coaches and replace them with LHB coaches with speed potential of 160kmph. Successful trial of T-18 by ICF has been done and the same is in the process of commissioning.
- **Standardization of coaching rakes enables first-in-first-out/ reduce** rescheduling/ avoid out of path running of trains. In the new time table 960 rakes out of 2732 rakes have been standardized.

Technology for practical uses

- **Quick Watering Facilities:** This facility allows quick filling of water in coaches, which is also essential to maintain cleanliness in them. 7 stations (Ajmer, Jaipur, Abu Road, Vijayawada, Villupuram, Erode and Vadodara stations) have been provided with quick watering facilities. Sanction for provision in 47 more stations has been obtained. For another 66 stations, work for out of sanction in Supplementary Demands for Grants 2018-19 at a cost of about Rs 230 cr has been planned and processed at Railway Board level. Instructions have been issued to all Zonal Railways to be in readiness to award the work as soon as sanction is received for above work. Further, Zonal Railways have been also processed sanction for 27 locations at their level.
- **Monitoring of punctuality** through Data Loggers: To authentically report train timings, a system of integrating data-loggers with the Control Office Application (COA) software has been started in Jan'08. Train timings are captured in real time at zonal interchange points and important inter divisional exchange points, there are 168 such points over IR.
- **Green Initiatives: Care for Environment** Assessment and rating of IRs Production Units and major Workshops as Green Industrial Units started with 'GreenCo' certification of 2 Workshops and 1 Production unit in 2016-17. 31 more Workshops, 4 more Production Units, 2 Diesel Sheds, one Stores depot and 2 STCs have been 'GreenCo' certified since. 22 of these units have been certified in current financial year 2018-19.
- **Eight Railway Stations** and two Railway Schools have achieved Green Certification. 6 out of these 8 railway stations achieved Green Certification in 2018-19. Rail Nilayam/ Secunderabad, IRICEN/Pune and Administrative building of ICF/Chennai are also certified as Green buildings. Railway Hospital Ajmer is the first railway hospital to achieve Green rating recently.
- **Head On Generation (HOG) System:** EOG system requires diesel fuel besides having other problems related with maintenance & pollution. In Head on Generation (HOG) electric power for the coaches is received from over head lines through two 500 KVA converters fitted in electric locomotive. This helps in eliminating noise and reduction in carbon foot print. Average saving with HOG on an average is around Rs.70000 per trip per train as it varies with duration of journey.
- **After development of concept in 2013-14,** Production Units have been turning out all LHB coaches as HOG compliant since December, 2016. A total of 126 EOG trains have been converted to HOG i.e. operating with HOG compliant locomotives. Year wise progress:

Promoting Tourism

- **Vistadome Coaches & Hill Railways :** These coaches are provided with enhanced viewing area including on roof to enable tourists to enjoy panoramic view while travelling. The feature has been well received. Total of four such coaches are in service on scenic sections.
- **Preservation of Heritage in Railways** In 2018, Railways implemented various policy reforms for meaningful preservation of Railway Heritage and promoting steam heritage tourism. These include creation of budget head for funding heritage related activities, unified structure of zonal level heritage committees, special delegation of powers to Divisional Railway Managers for promoting steam tourism, provision of engagement of retired railway officials for heritage preservation etc. As a result of these reforms, this year witnessed inauguration of steam charter services over Kangra Valley Railway (KVR) and Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR), special steam hauled round trip services over Kalka Shimla Railway & Nilgiri Mountain Railway, introduction of AC coaches over Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, introduction of weekly steam service between Garhi Hasru – Farukhnagar in Delhi Division, steam tourist specials in South India hauled by EIR-21 (Express) which is one of the World's oldest working steam locomotives (Year built 1855) etc. All these have immensely helped creating interest in steam heritage tourism in the country.

- **Steps taken include** : As a major Digital India initiative in recent years, Ministry of Railways partnered with Google's nonprofit Arts & Culture initiative to make India's railways century old heritage accessible worldwide using advanced digital technologies through online storytelling and virtual reality. This is a first of its kind effort of Indian Railways to digitize its heritage and bring it online for universal access.
- **The project, named Lifeline of a Nation (accessible at <https://g.co/indianrailways>)** was launched by Minister of Railways on 28th September, 2018. The online platform brings together a collection of digital storytelling with more than 3,000 images, 150 videos and 150 iconic locations of Indian Railways across India. The project offers insights regarding the lesser known stories and heroic efforts of people like track men, station charges and workshop engineers, to celebrate their contribution to India's Railways.
- **On 15th August, 2018**, Railways launched digital museums at selected railway stations in India to spread awareness among public about the rich heritage of railways. The effort aimed at showcasing the more than century old the legacy of Indian Railways via one to two minute-long movie clips on digital LED screens at the entrance gate of railway stations and also at different comfort areas. The short films will showcase heritage buildings, locomotives and much more to make people aware of the rich heritage of Indian Railways. With a target to reach 100 stations, so far these screens are operational at more than 30 stations.
- **As a living example of industrial heritage and to depict technological development over Indian Railways**, five meter gauge (MG) and three narrow gauge (NG) lines have been identified for preservations and further developing them as heritage tourism destinations.
- **In December, 2018**, Railways notified the Indian Railways Heritage Charter (IRHC) -2018, for the first time in its history, outlining its commitment and providing broad guidelines for restoration, preservation and conservation of century old rich railway heritage of India.
- **Revival of steam locomotives**: To preserve the rich heritage of Indian Railways, vigorous efforts of revival of steam locomotives, since 2017 has been taken. This has resulted in to revival of EIR 21, the oldest steam locomotive in the world by Golden Rock Workshop of Southern Railway, Beyer Garratt by Kharagpur Workshop of South Eastern Railway, ZB 66 in Kangra Valley section and Miss Muffet by Jamalpur Workshop of Eastern Railway.
- **Customer Focused Policies for Freight** To make the rail transportation attractive to its customers, various initiatives were taken in 2017-18 which includes tariff rationalisation, classification of new commodities, expansion of freight basket through containerisation, new delivery models like RORO services, Long Term Tariff Contract policy with key customer, Station to Station rate, Double Stack Dwarf Container (DSDC), Customer friendly rationalization of weighment Policy, Electronic Registration for Demand of Wagons (e-RD) etc. These policies launched in 2017-18 have been further extended upto March 2019.
- **The main initiatives undertaken during 2018-19 are:-** Electronic Transmission of Railway Receipts (eT-RR) With introduction of E-RD (Electronic Registration for Demand of wagon), eT-RR has been implemented which use a user-friendly and paperless transaction system where Railway Receipt is generated and transmitted electronically to customer through FOIS and delivery of goods is given through e-surrender of eT-RR. That is, customer is saved the hassle of carrying physical Railway Receipt from originating to destination station. After success of pilot project at one terminal namely HPCL/Loni of Central Railway, it has been implemented over Northern Railway in second phase in March 2018. Proliferation on pan India basis is on anvil.

Customer friendly rationalization of weighment Policy

- **Zonal railways** have been empowered to permit weightometer / pre-weighbin system of weighment in private siding on case- to- case basis w.e.f. 18.06.2018. Dispensation from mandatory (100%) weighment in the case of container rake loaded with containers carrying standard bags of uniform size.
- **Exemption from weighment** has been granted in case of loading of standard Bags of uniform size in container. Low density commodities like Pet Coke, Met Coke, Chuni and De-oiled cake have been exempted from mandatory weighment. Designed tare weight of new wagons namely BOXNS, BCFC, BRHNEHS, BOBRNHS, BOBRNEL, BOBYNHS, BFNSM 22.9 has been notified
- **Issue of multiple Railway Receipts (RRs) for container traffic** Indian Railways had extended facility of multiple RRs in favour of more than one Container Train Operator for a single container train (w.e.f.20.04.2017). The guidelines have been implemented recently in September 2018. This facility has come in on an opportune time as M/o Shipping has now relaxed 'Cabotage' law for foreign vessels on transportation of loaded for empty containers between Indian ports. With this relaxation, aggregation of containers at ports is likely to get a fillip. The facility of multiple RRs(Railway Receipts) for each operator shall further aid aggregation and promote economic growth. In addition, it is in sync with GST requirements and shall help each operator to avail Input Tax Credit(ITC) as per freight paid.
- **Promoting containerization To promote containerisation, following measures have been taken:** – Introduction of new delivery model of Double Stack Dwarf Container to be charged by applying 17% concession on FAK rate has been extended upto 31.03.2019. The methodology for levying Terminal Access Charge (TAC) for handling container train in railway terminal has been liberalised from 1.5 times to one time in case of double operation (i.e. unloading followed by loading), reduces non-freight cost to customer.
- **With effect from 11.07.2018**, movement of CP Coke, a restricted commodity, has now been permitted in transportation in container at CCR (Container Class Rate) i.e. by applying 15% concession on Applicable class rate published in Goods tariff.
- **Decision has been taken** to transport empty containers and empty flat wagon for private container rakes at a discount of 25%. The move is likely to give a thrust to movement of empty container by rail towards ports to return as loaded, thus profiting Indian Railway with higher container share.

- **Liberalised Automatic Freight Rebate Scheme in Empty flow Directions** This scheme has been issued w.e.f.01.01.2017. Under this scheme loaded traffic in empty flow direction is being charged at LR1 (with certain conditions), which amounts to average discount of 30 – 40%. In the revised policy, benefit has been extended to the traffic booked from originating Division to intermediate point on that O-D division. Further, rebate has also been extended to the traffic booked from originating division to all the other divisions (not listed in the empty flow direction) of the destination zone. This will help to decrease empty flow movement of rakes. This scheme has further reviewed and revised guidelines have been issued w.e.f. 01.10.2018. This will help to decrease empty flow movement of rakes.

Freight Heavy Haul Initiatives:

- **Prototype of the 25T axle load BOXNS wagons** was made in Oct'15. The wagon will run at 100 kmph in loaded and empty condition with pay load to tare ratio of 4.1 as compared to conventional BOXNHL wagons, which have payload to tare ratio of about 3.6. These wagons will achieve increased throughput per rake by 14.8%. 25t wagons are required for operation on DFC, which were tried upto 110/100 kmph on SER successfully. Induction of these wagons has already started, till Nov. 2018, 2600 wagons are in operation and another 2400 are in the pipe line.
- **For increasing throughput** of finished goods and other containable goods, a dwarf container has been designed which can be moved in double stack loading even under electrified sections of IR. This enables increase in throughput of containable commodity even on electrified lines. This service has been opened on Jamnagar-Ludhiana route and efforts are on to proliferate on other routes also.
- **In the area of multimodal transport**, the concept of Road-Railers which was under trial for past few year has been finalized in 2016-17. The commercial operation of the train has started in August, 2018. This allows for specially designed road trailers to bring container load form the customer premises to Railway sidings where it gets converted to train and goes to the destination. This initiative brings door to door delivery for container traffic without need for any container handling at railway premises.
- **In the area of transportation** of finished steel namely hot rolled and cold rolled steel coils, new wagon BFNSM has been designed which is specifically designed for increasing the throughput of steel coil by more than 35% per rake compared to other similar wagons. Safety approvals for this have been obtained and induction of these wagons has started in 2018 already.
- **Transformation of Indian Railways** Large scale process and cultural reforms are being introduced in order to steadily transform Indian Railways into a more vibrant and efficient organization and make it an engine of economic growth and development of the country. Empowerment of General Managers (GMs), Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) and frontline staff and comprehensive delegation of powers have been done so as to fast track decision making, Deliverance and overall working of Railways. Model Schedule of Powers has also been issued from Railway Board in October 2017 (revised version in July 2018) for the first time to bring uniformity in delegations across zones.
- **The enhanced delegations** and empowerment will improve safety, give faster access to work and breakdown sites, improve station and passenger interfaces, ease of procurement by user departments, improve upkeep of equipment, improve cleanliness and hygiene at stations and in trains and enhance training and capacity building of staff.
- **Stress on integrity and ethics** - Prime thrust of Indian Railways is on transparency in its functioning and on impeccable integrity of its employees at all levels. In this aspect, a policy of zero tolerance against corruption is being followed. Mission Satya Nishtha has been launched on 27 July 2018 across IR to inculcate the culture of honesty and transparency.
- **Workshop on Leadership and Emotional Intelligence** for GMs and DRMs has been organized at NAIR to further align the top management of the Railways with the Transformation initiatives (Workshop for GMs held on 10 & 11 Nov' 2018, for DRMs on 17 & 18 Dec 2018 and 8 & 9 Dec 2018). This is being further proliferated to the level of Principal Heads of Departments.

Personnel & Educational Initiatives

- **Two recruitment drives were launched by the Railways in the first half of the year:-** For 27,795 ALPs and 36,576 Technicians (Total – 64,371). For 62,907 vacancies in Level I including Trackmen. The first stage examination involving 47.56 lakh candidates have been successfully completed on 04.09.2018 with record attendance percentage of 77%.
- **For Level I**, a total of 1.90 crores have been called for examination which commenced on 17th September, 2018 and ended successfully on 17th December, 2018. Total attendance in this examination was about 61%. It is a paperless and computer based test.
- **Thus in a short time** of less than nine (9) months, the Railway has not only called for the applications, but shortlisted them and organized the recruitment examinations too. It is the biggest computer based test involving about 2.40 crore candidates.

- **To address the problem** of inaccuracies and deficiencies in the assessment of vacancies on Indian Railways and their linkages to RRBs, Online Indenting and Recruitment Management System (OIRMS) has been implemented in recruitment processes against latest Centralized Employment Notifications (CENs) No.01/2018 for the posts of ALP & Technicians and 02/2018 for vacancy assessment by Railways/PSUs, and online indenting of the same have been carried out with the help of OIRMS software.
- **India's first Rail and Transportation University** National Rail and Transportation Institute (NRTI), Vadodara has begun its first academic session with two under-graduate programmes from 05th September, 2018. A total of 103 students (17 girls and 86 boys) have joined the two courses (62 in B.Sc. and 41 in BBA). The Courses are:-
- **B.Sc. in Transportation Technology** BBA Programme in Transportation Management The NRTI was dedicated to the nation on 15th December, 2018.
- **Employees grievance redressal** and health check up camps across Indian Railways In September 2017 Zonal Railways and Production Units organized grievance redressal camps at various field locations for redressal of employees grievances. This was combined with health checkup of employees. In the above camp the service records of the employees were shown to the employees and copies also supplied to them. 9025 health camps were held throughout the country for employees during last 12 months. 12 lakh employees were covered in this drive.
- **Training under 'Project Saksham'** A massive training programme named as 'Project Saksham' has been launched this year for giving 5 days on the job training to all 12 lakhs employees of Indian Railways. This will help in competence building of employees and thereby productivity and efficiency of the organization. We have by now trained more than 12 lakhs employees which is a record in itself.
- **Introduction of objective type question in Departmental promotion examination in Railways.** In order to bring objectivity in the selection procedure in departmental selections, Ministry of Railways has introduced a system of 100% objective question for departmental selection in non-gazetted categories by way of either computer based test or by OMR sheets. The benefits of objective type question paper are – greater coverage of subject questions, transparency in selection, quick declaration of result and avoidance of complaint from candidates. A question bank on each of the subject will be prepared, to be updated from time to time.

Introduction of Mobile application on staff matter.

- **Various Zonal Railways** have launched Mobile applications to cater to service request for Railway employees. This will improve the grievance redressal mechanism and help in better productivity of staff as satisfaction level of staff will improve.
- **Scanning of service records of all employees.** Ministry of Railways has had scan more than 12 lakh service records of its employees. This will improve access of service records to employees. Our further aim is to use the scanned records for development and launch of HRMS application.
- **Development and updation of data on COMPTRAN** A portal named as COMPTRAN (Common Portal for Mutual transfer) for employees desiring mutual transfer to their place of residence has been developed which helps in online search for mutual partners for employees' inter Zonal transfers. Recently, the Zonal Railways have been asked to update the data on the portal so that it is helpful for employees as regards search for their mutual partner is concerned. This is a welfare scheme for employees of Indian Railways.
- **Aadhar Enabled Bio-metric Attendance System (AEBAS)** AEBAS has been implemented on Indian Railways in compliance with DOPT's instructions contained in their OM No.11013/9/2014-Estt(A-iii) dated 21.11.2014. This will improve monitoring of staff attendance and hence improve productivity.
- **Sports Continuing with its winning spree**, RSPB has been doing fabulously in 28 game disciplines on national and international sports arena and is a established and one of the most prestigious Sports Bodies in India today. Indian Railways is a proud institutions today having 162 Arjuna awardees, 21 Padmashree and 5 Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna awardees on its roll besides thousands of national and international talented athletes. Indian Railways performance in the field of sports has been unparalleled.
- **Railway Sports Promotion Board** made a number of policy changes in the larger interest of sports and brought out following changes during January-November 2018:
 - **To pave the way of becoming officer**, RSPB has made provisions more easier to its athletes who are representing India in various international championships. RSPB has introduced 3-4 coaching camps and started fielding its teams atleast 4-5 national level tournaments and has started giving hotel accommodations to its athletes participating in national/international tournaments.
 - **As a result**, RSPB has been able to get podium performances from its athletes in 40 national championships, best ever performance of RSPB till date. Internationally also, RSPB has come out with 10 gold medals in Commonwealth games and 27 medals in Asian Games besides other various international tournaments.
 - **RSPB successfully** hosted the World Cycling Championship at Bikaner in North Western Railway recently.

Research and Development

- **Streamlining of vendor** registration process of RDSO: A number of steps have been taken by RDSO towards streamlining new vendor registration process. The process of vendor registration has been made completely online and there has been reduction in average time of fresh registration cases from existing 30 months to 6 months. EOI has been floated by RDSO open for application throughout the year.
- **Hence suppliers** based outside Lucknow, now have the provision of online vendor registration application and the whole process of registration is completed within a specific timeline. There was also an emphasis to resolve all the pending vendor registration cases in within reasonable time frame. There were 691 old pending cases initially by October'17 which have been brought down to 98 by December'18.
- **Collaboration with Other Research and Academic Institutions:** IR has made a significant move by engaging with IITs (Indian Institute of Technology) to leverage their core competencies in developing new technologies and products. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)s have been signed in the between Ministry of Railways and these institutes for establishing Centre of Railway Research (CRR)s. The research domains allocated to these CRRs', based on their competencies, have been listed below:

'SAMANVAY'

- **'SAMANVAY' Portal for co-ordination with State Governments:** A 'SAMANVAY' portal (www.railsamanvay.co.in) has been developed for online reporting of issues pending with State Governments pertaining to infrastructural developmental projects which are being undertaken by different Railway agencies. Concerned State Governments were requested to go through the pending issues of Railways in States which are uploaded on SAMANVAY portal and take needful action to help Railway expedite its developmental/expansion projects.
- **Rail Good Work Portal:** With a view to generate numerous innovative yet practical ideas across the most critical areas of Railways Operations, the Railway board has undertaken several initiatives from time to time. Rail Good Work Portal is an on-line platform for all units under IR, where they can showcase the various good works being done by them. An exercise has been undertaken to identify the best and the most impactful entries uploaded on the good works portal and ask the innovators for descriptive videos for mass scale implementation across IR and to further encourage the habit of doing good work and reporting thereon.

FDI in e-commerce

- **The main features of the clarification include:** Vendors that have any stake owned by an e-commerce company cannot sell their products on that e-commerce company's portal.
- **Any vendor who purchases 25%** or more of its inventory from an e-commerce group company will be considered to be controlled by that e-commerce company, and thereby barred from selling on its portal. This provision aims to ensure that vendors in which marketplaces, such as Amazon, have a stake do not sell the bulk of their items to a third-party vendor who then goes on to sell those items on the e-commerce marketplace.
- **In other words, the provision** seeks to deny control by the marketplace entity over vendors. E-commerce firm will not be allowed to influence the price of a product sold on its portal by giving incentives to particular vendors.
- **Background:** E-commerce companies can operate under two different models in India. The first is the marketplace model where the e-commerce firm simply acts as a platform that connects buyers and sellers. FDI is allowed in e-commerce companies in this model. The second model is inventory-based where the inventory of goods sold on the portal is owned or controlled by the e-commerce company. FDI is not allowed under this model.
- **What is the context for these changes?** What has been happening is that large e-commerce companies such as Amazon and Flipkart, while not owning inventory themselves, have been providing a platform for their group companies such as CloudTail and WS Retail respectively. Some see this as skewing the playing field, especially if these vendors enjoyed special incentives from the e-commerce firm, over others. These controlled or owned vendors may then be able to offer discounts to customers that competitors may not be able to match.

- **Significance:** The thrust of the DIPP policy is directed at protecting small vendors on e-commerce websites. It seeks to ensure small players selling on the portals are not discriminated against in favour of vendors in which e-commerce companies have a stake. The new set up will ensure a level playing field for all vendors looking to sell on the e-commerce portals. Smaller marketplaces that do not have stake in any vendors will also be able to now compete with the big daddies.
- **The small traders** were complaining that deep discounts offered by the likes of Amazon and Flipkart are driving them out of business. The new norms aim to tackle the anti-competitive behaviour by e-commerce entities and to ensure that there is no wrong subsidization and the marketplace remains neutral to all vendors.
- **Who else will be affected?** The main players to be affected will be group companies and affiliates of the biggest e-commerce platforms, Amazon and Flipkart. The provision that bars companies — in which e-commerce firms have a stake — from selling on their portals will hurt start-ups as well, since many of these will be barred from selling due to minor equity stakes being held by the e-commerce companies.
- **Small vendors** will not be as affected because most of them do not purchase more than 25% of their inventory from a single source and so they will be allowed to sell their items on the e-commerce platforms.

Zika warning: India rebuts CDC Zika alert

- **The government** took exception to the use of “endemic” in the advisory as Zika outbreaks in India have been contained within small areas.
- **Background:** The CDC had said the virus was endemic to India and pointed out “there is an unusual increase in the number of Zika cases in Rajasthan and surrounding states”. It cautioned pregnant women against travelling to such areas. This is because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects. The health agency classified its alert under Level 2, which requires “enhanced protection”. Level 1 advises “usual precautions” and Level 3 advises against “non-essential travel”.
- **What is Zika Virus?** Zika virus is similar to dengue fever, yellow fever and West Nile virus. Carried by infected Aedes aegypti mosquitos, Zika is largely transmitted through bites, but can also occur through intrauterine infection.
- **It was first identified in 1947 in Zika Forest, Uganda from where it derives its name.** If a woman is bitten by an infected mosquito and becomes infected, Zika can cross into the placenta and affect the fetus. While anyone can contract Zika, pregnant women are the most at risk due to the potential for fetal microcephaly and other neurologic abnormalities.
- **Symptoms include fever,** headache, red eyes, skin rash, fatigue, muscle pain etc. Treatment and Prevention: There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available to treat Zika. The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites and clearing stagnant water where mosquitoes breed.

India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to UNFCCC

- **Background:** The submission of India's second BUR would fulfil the obligation of India to furnish information regarding implementation of the convention, being a party. The scope of the BUR is to provide an update to India's first BUR to the UNFCCC.
- **The second biennial** update report aims to provide an update to India's first biennial report to the United Nation's body on climate change. The report contains five major components including national circumstances, national greenhouse gas inventory, mitigation actions, finance, technology and capacity building needs and support received and domestic monitoring, reporting and verification arrangements.
- **Key findings:** Out of the total emissions, energy sector accounted for 73%, IPPU 8%, agriculture 16% and waste sector 3%. About 12% of the emissions were offset by the carbon sink action of forestland, cropland and settlements.
- **INDC- India's proposed targets:** Reduce emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35% by 2030 from 2005 level. Achieve about 40% electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030 with help of transfer of technology and low cost international finance. Create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- **About UNFCCC:** The UNFCCC was adopted in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, which marked the beginning of the international community's first concerted effort to confront the problem of climate change.

- **Known also** as the Rio Convention, the UNFCCC established a framework for action to stabilise concentrations of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere. The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994, and nearly all of the world's nations—a total of 195—have now signed on.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- **About CPEC:** The CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing's influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects. The 3,000 km-long China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consisting of highways, railways, and pipelines is the latest irritant in the India–China relationship.
- **CPEC eventually** aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China's North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways. The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants such as Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.
- **But, why is India concerned?** It passes through PoK. Any Indian participation would inextricably be linked to the country's legitimate claims on PoK.
- **CPEC rests** on a Chinese plan to secure and shorten its supply lines through Gwadar with an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is widely believed that upon CPEC's fruition, an extensive Chinese presence will undermine India's influence in the Indian Ocean.
- **It is also being** contended that if CPEC were to successfully transform the Pakistan economy that could be a "red rag" for India which will remain at the receiving end of a wealthier and stronger Pakistan.
- **Besides,** India shares a great deal of trust deficit with China and Pakistan and has a history of conflict with both. As a result, even though suggestions to re-approach the project pragmatically have been made, no advocate has overruled the principle strands of contention that continue to mar India's equations with China and Pakistan.

BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS)

- **The positioning** accuracy of the system has reached 10 metres globally and five metres in the Asia-Pacific region. Its velocity accuracy is 0.2 metres per second, while its timing accuracy stands at 20 nanoseconds. Pakistan has become the first country to use the BeiDou system ending its reliance on the Global Positioning System (GPS).
- **Significance:** It will be the fourth global satellite navigation system after the US GPS, Russia's GLONASS and the European Union's Galileo.
- **About BeiDou Satellite System:** Named after the Chinese term for Big Dipper, the BeiDou system started providing independent services over China in 2000. It is being projected by Beijing as a rival to the American Global Positioning System (GPS).
- **The full constellation** is scheduled to comprise 35 satellites. BeiDou has two separate constellations, BeiDou-1 and BeiDou-2. BeiDou-1 also known as first generation was a constellation of three satellites. BeiDou-2, also known as COMPASS, is the second generation of the system. It became operational in the year 2011.
- **What are the various GNSS systems?** The four global GNSS systems are – GPS (US), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (EU), BeiDou (China). Additionally, there are two regional systems – QZSS (Japan) and IRNSS or NavIC (India).

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar:

- **Key facts:** Three eligible institutions and individuals will be given the 'Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar' every year with cash rewards ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 51 lakh. If the awardee is an institution, it will be given a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 51 lakh and the prize money will be utilised for disaster management-related activities only.

- **If the awardee** is an individual, the person shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh. An application by an institution does not debar any individual from that institution to apply for the award in his individual capacity.
- **Eligibility:** Only Indian nationals and Indian institutions can apply for the award. For institutional awards, voluntary organisations, corporate entities, academic, research institutions, response, uniformed forces or any other institution may apply for the award.
- **The applicant** must have worked in the area of disaster management like prevention, mitigation, preparedness, rescue, response, relief, rehabilitation, research, innovation or early warning related work in India. The application must be accompanied by details of the work done in disaster management and must highlight achievements in any one or more of the areas like saving human lives, reduction in impact of disasters on lives, livestock, livelihoods, property, society, economy, or environment.
- **Mobilisation** and provision of resources for effective response during disasters, immediate relief work in disaster hit areas and communities, effective and innovative use of technology in any field of disaster management and disaster mitigation initiatives in hazard prone areas are some of the other criteria.

Capacity Building Programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

- **The Government of India** has initiated the Capacity Building Programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- **Objective of the Capacity Building Programme** – to empower EWRs by developing leadership capacities so that they serve as catalysts for social change and function as peer facilitators in the field, become vocal for their rights and participate effectively in the governance processes. It is a significant endeavour in creating a forum for EWRs to understand their roles and responsibilities in a more prolific manner. Although it is the first step towards harnessing the full potential of EWRs, but this is envisioned as a continuous process in order to instil confidence, courage, conviction, motivation and above all providing hand-holding support to EWRs for mainstreaming them in the governance process.
- **State Governments' Contribution:** State Governments have been actively involved in imparting these trainings. Mainly, State Institute of Rural Developments (SIRDs) and State Resource Centers (SRCs) are actively collaborating with Ministry of Women and Child Development in conducting training programmes across the States. This involves collaborating with institutions of the Departments of Panchayati Raj, Agriculture, Women & Child Development, Rural Development, etc.
- **Background:** The project is being implemented by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), an autonomous body functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.
- **Ministry of Women & Child Development** has also developed training modules regarding laws for protection of women and children, development schemes and programmes (State and Center), Information Communication Technology (ICT) for the EWRs, participatory planning and asset creation, monitoring of Public Works and leadership qualities. This approach to build capacities of these grassroots leaders has been envisaged to yield more desired development outcomes.

River Dolphins go missing in Sunderbans:

- **Highlights of the study:** The national aquatic animal is no longer sighted in the central and eastern parts of Sunderbans region. Only in the western part of Sunderbans, where the salinity is lower, could researchers find some evidence of the species. The hyper-saline zone in the central part of the Sunderbans, which includes areas such as Raidighi and Patharpratima has lost connectivity with the upstream freshwater flow.
- **Concerns:** The study shows that how natural changes including the phenomenon of climate change and human interventions in the Indian Sunderbans are having an adverse impact on the habitat of the species. The rise in sea level, triggered by climate change, is one of the reasons for the increase in salinity of waters of rivers and channels. Hydrological modifications like water diversion and commission of large barrages upstream have had a great impact on the salinity profile of the rivers downstream in the Sunderbans.
- **Need of the hour:** Because of its unique body shape, it becomes difficult for the dolphin to remain submerged in waters with high salinity. Hence freshwater flow to the Sunderbans is crucial for the subsistence of these species.
- **About Gangetic River Dolphin:** Gangetic river dolphins fall under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act. It has been declared an 'endangered' species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

- **The Gangetic river species found in India, Bangladesh and Nepal is almost completely blind.** The Gangetic river dolphin is one of the four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in the Yangtze river, the Indus river in Pakistan and the Amazon river.



Mahila Police Volunteers

- **All Chief Secretaries** of States/UTs have been requested to adopt this initiative in their respective States.
- **Background:** Haryana is the first state to adopt the initiative at Karnal and Mahendergarh District on a pilot basis under Nirbhaya Fund during the financial year 2016-2017. Further, the proposals of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have also been approved for implementation of MPVs.
- **About the scheme:** Originally conceived by the Union Ministry of Women & Child Development, Mahila Police Volunteer is a joint initiative with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **The Mahila Police Volunteers** scheme envisages creation of a link between the police authorities and the local communities in villages through police volunteers who will be women specially trained for this purpose. Their primary job will be to keep an eye on situations where women in the village are harassed or their rights and entitlements are denied or their development is prevented.
- **In order to provide** a link between police and community and facilitate women in distress, one Mahila Police Volunteer (MPV) is envisaged per Gram Panchayat across the country. MPV must be atleast 21 years old and class 12th These will be selected through a laid out procedure from among the empowered, responsible, socially aware women who will facilitate police outreach on gender concerns.

Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative

- **Key highlights of the scheme:** The mission, which forms part of the CSR initiative of OMCs in Odisha, is aimed to educate women on female hygiene and health, improve accessibility to low cost eco-friendly sanitary pads and boost rural employment and economy. The three companies will set up 100 manufacturing units at the Common Service Centres (CSC) covering 93 Blocks across 30 districts of Odisha at an estimated cost of ₹2.94 crore.
- **At least 10 Ujjwala** beneficiary women will get employment at each CSC. Each facility will have a capacity to produce 1,200-2,000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use by rural women. The CSCs are also being provided with raw material, enough to make 45,000-50,000 pads. These napkins will be priced at ₹40 per pack, each containing eight pads.
- **The Ujjwala pads** will be made of virgin wood pulp sheet, non-woven white sheet and a gel sheet which are all biodegradable in nature and will leave minimal carbon footprint.

Rajasthan government scraps minimum education criteria for civic poll candidates

- **What's the issue?** The education criteria was introduced by the previous government, which stipulated that for contesting the zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls, a contestant must have a minimum qualification of secondary education (Class X). To contest the sarpanch elections, an aspirant from the general category must have passed Class VIII and a SC/ST aspirant must have passed Class V.
- **Why has it been scrapped?** Few experts are of the opinion that the requirement of minimum qualification for contesting elections is against the very spirit of 73rd and 74th amendments. It also violates the right of every citizen to vote and to contest elections, which form the basic structure of the constitution. It may be noted here that due to these restrictions, many able candidates were debarred from contesting elections. In one way, it can be said that this law has prevented many people from coming to the mainstream.

- **What has the Supreme Court said in this regard?** Even Haryana had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions. The constitutional validity of this law of Haryana was questioned in the Supreme Court.
- **The Supreme Court** had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government to bar the illiterate from contesting panchayat polls in the state. The Supreme Court had ruled that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad".
- **The Supreme Court's** interpretation is based on the fact that uneducated or illiterate people getting elected to the local bodies can easily be misled by officials if they don't know to write and read. In such cases, administrative actions that they are going can pose many challenges. The Court has further observed that it is only the education which can give people the power to differentiate between right and wrong, and good and bad.
- **Background:** Rajasthan Literacy Rate 2011: Literacy rate in Rajasthan has seen upward trend and is 66.11 percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 79.19 percent while female literacy is at 52.12 percent. In 2001, literacy rate in Rajasthan stood at 60.41 percent.

One District, One Product Regional Summit

- **About ODOP:** ODOP is aimed at giving a major push to traditional industries synonymous with the respective districts of the state. The objective of the ODOP is to optimise production, productivity and income, preservation and development of local crafts, promotion of art, improvement in product quality and skill development.
- **Background:** ODOP is basically a Japanese business development concept, which gained prominence in 1979. It is aimed at promoting a competitive and staple product from a specific area to push sales and improve the standard of living of the local population. Over time, it has been replicated in other Asian countries as well.
- **The main objectives of the One District One Product Scheme of Uttar Pradesh are as follows:** Preservation and development of local crafts / skills and promotion of the art. Increase in the incomes and local employment (resulting in decline in migration for employment).
- **Improvement in product quality and skill development.** Transforming the products in an artistic way (through packaging, branding). To connect the production with tourism (Live demo and sales outlet – gifts and souvenir). To resolve the issues of economic difference and regional imbalance. To take the concept of ODOP to national and international level after successful implementation at State level.
- **Facts for Prelims:** UP is uniquely famous for product-specific traditional industrial hubs across 75 districts, including Varanasi (Banarasi silk sari), Bhadohi (carpet), Lucknow (chikan), Kanpur (leather goods), Agra (leather footwear), Aligarh (locks), Moradabad (brassware), Meerut (sports goods) and Saharanpur (wooden products).

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

- **It will serve** as a hub for rice research and training in South Asia and SAARC region. This first international Center in the eastern India is expected to harness and sustain rice production in the region.
- **About IRRI: What is it?** The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is an international agricultural research and training organization known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in the 1960s.
- **Aim:** The Institute, established in 1960 aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming.
- **CGIAR:** IRRI is one of 15 agricultural research centers in the world that form the CGIAR Consortium of International Agricultural Research centres, a global partnership of organizations engaged in research on food security. It is also the largest non-profit agricultural research centres in Asia.
- **India and the IRRI:** IRRI has successfully collaborated with Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) to introduce drought- tolerant, flood-tolerant and salt-tolerant varieties of rice in India. The Varanasi Centre would help increase farmers' income by enhancing and supporting rice productivity, reducing cost of production, value addition, diversification and enhancement of farmers' skills.

Minimum Support Prices (MSPs)

- **The new MFP** under the scheme includes Mahua flowers (dried), Tejpatta (dried) and Kokum (dry).
- **Background:** The Pricing Cell, constituted by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED), recommended inclusion of new MFPs under the scheme, given their importance to the economy of local communities.
- **Significance:** A Planning Commission report had noted that MFP contributes to 20 to 40 per cent of the income of forest-dependent communities, especially the landless with a dominant population of tribals, and “provides critical subsistence during lean seasons.” The MFP economy, however, is also known to suffer from unorganised and uncertain market demands, affecting economic returns to these communities.
- **About MSP:** What is it? In theory, an MSP is the minimum price set by the Government at which farmers can expect to sell their produce for the season. When market prices fall below the announced MSPs, procurement agencies step in to procure the crop and ‘support’ the prices.
- **Who announces?** The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces MSP for various crops at the beginning of each sowing season based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The CACP takes into account demand and supply, the cost of production and price trends in the market among other things when fixing MSPs.
- **Why is it important?** Price volatility makes life difficult for farmers. Though prices of agri commodities may soar while in short supply, during years of bumper production, prices of the very same commodities plummet. MSPs ensure that farmers get a minimum price for their produce in adverse markets. MSPs have also been used as a tool by the Government to incentivise farmers to grow crops that are in short supply.

Chang’e-4 mission

- **Background:** The Moon is tidally locked to Earth, rotating at the same rate that it orbits our planet, so the far side is never visible from Earth. The probe, the Chang’e-4, is expected to make the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the Moon. Previous spacecraft have seen the far side of the Moon, but none has landed on it.
- **The far side** of the moon known as ‘South Pole-Aitken Basin’ still remains a mystery among space scientists and by sending a probe there, China will outdo the historical achievements of the US and USSR.
- **About the mission:** Chang’e 4 is the fourth mission in the country’s lunar mission series which is being named after the Chinese moon goddess. The tasks of the Chang’e-4 probe include low-frequency radio astronomical observation, surveying the terrain and landforms, detecting the mineral composition, and measuring the neutron radiation and neutral atoms to study the environment on the far side of the moon.
- **Significance of the mission:** According to experts, landing on the far side of the moon is undoubtedly one of the most challenging missions ever launched by any of the world’s superpowers.
- **History of China’s lunar exploration programmes:** China began their lunar exploration program in 2007 by launching a simple lunar orbiter named ‘Chang’e 1’. The second mission in the program named ‘Chang’e 2’ was launched in 2010, and it was later followed by the third mission ‘Chang’e 3’. ‘Chang’e 3’ made headlines all around the world as it marked the first soft moon landing since 1976.

REDD+

- **Highlights of the study:** Large-scale finance for REDD+ has been a major issue as carbon markets have not materialised and international funding commitments for REDD+ have been much lower than expected. “REDD+ implementation costs have been high and benefits for local communities from REDD+ projects have been minimal. There is need to rethink the REDD+ mechanism based on these experiences and the findings emerging from new research on the potential of forests to mitigate climate change.
- **India’s REDD+ strategy:** Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy. The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India’s National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC. The strategy report has been prepared by Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.

- **Background:** Since its formalisation in 2006, REDD+ had emerged as the most prominent global mechanism to integrate the role of forests in climate change. It was touted as a win-win situation for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and local livelihoods.
- **More than 300** REDD+ initiatives have taken off since 2006. The mechanism has been enshrined in the Paris Agreement of 2015, and its implementation is transitioning from smaller, isolated projects to larger, jurisdictional programmes with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies.
- **About REDD+:** In simple terms, REDD+ means “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation”, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.
- **REDD+ is** a mechanism developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.
- **Developing** countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions. REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

World’s largest science meet ‘Indian Science Congress (ISC)-2019’ will be held from 3rd to 7th January 2019, in Jalandhar, Punjab.

- **Theme of ISC** – Future India: Science and Technology
- **“Government’s aim** is to deliver the benefits of Science & Technology to the last man in the society and scientists being a pivot should put their heart and soul into finding new solutions to the problems facing the nation and improve the quality of life of common man”. It is the only second time for a University of Punjab to organize their herculean science spectacle.
- **Background:** The Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) owes its origin to the foresight and initiative of two British Chemists, namely, Professor J.L. Simonsen and Professor P.S. MacMohan.
- **To advance** and promote the cause of science in India. To hold an annual congress at a suitable place in India. To publish such proceedings, journals, transactions and other publications as may be considered desirable. To secure and manage funds and endowments for the promotion of Science. The first meeting of the Congress was held from January 15-17, 1914 at the premises of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

Madhya Pradesh to get ‘spiritual department’:

- **The proposed** Adhyatmik Vibhag (Spiritual Department) going to be formed by merging Dharmik Nyas Evam Dharmasv Department (Religious Trust and Endowment Department), Anand Vibhag (Happiness Department) in addition to the Directorate of Religious Trust and Endowment, Madhya Pradesh Teerth Evam Mela Pradhikaran and Rajya Anand Sansthan.
- **Postal Stamp** dedicated to Nabin Chandra Das, inventor of Rosogolla launched in West Bengal: Context: A postal stamp dedicated to Nabin Chandra Das, inventor of Rosogolla was launched recently on Bagbazar-O-Rosogolla Utsob marking the 150th year of its invention.
- **Bagbazar-O-Rasogolla Utsob:** Bagbazar O Rosogolla Utsob, a three-day Rosogolla Utsav is being held at Bagbazar, Kolkata as a tribute to Nabin Chandra Das, inventor of Rosogolla. The statue of Nabin Chandra Das was also unveiled during the inaugural programme.
- **3 Andaman & Nicobar islands renamed as tribute to Netaji:** Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on December 30th, announced renaming of three islands of Andaman and Nicobar archipelago as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.
- **The Ross Island** was renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, the Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep and the Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep. Significance of December 30th: On this day in 1943, Bose had suggested that Andaman and Nicobar Islands be renamed as Shahid and Swaraj Dweep respectively. During the World War II, the Japanese had captured the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Netaji came here as the Azad Hind Fauz led by him was an ally of the Japanese force. This year marks 75 years of the event.



Indian Army

- **Internal Security Situation** in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K): The security situation in J&K despite a lot of challenges has been brought under control. Relentless operations by the Army both, along the Line of Control (LoC) and in the hinterland have thwarted the designs of giving a fillip to the proxy war being waged against India. Army along with CAPF and JKP continues to put in pressure to bring back normalcy to the Kashmir Valley.
- **Internal Security Situation** in North East: Intelligence based operations have been launched along the India-Myanmar border to maintain peace in the region and to effectively neutralise the terrorists. Indian Army has continued the people friendly operations to help the locals.
- **Situation along LAC:** Indian Army is well poised all along the LAC and status quo is being ensured.

Training Events & Military Exercises

- **Indo-French Joint Military Exercise:** Indo-French joint military exercise was conducted at Mailly Le Camp, France from January 28 to February 04, 2018. The aim of the exercise was to acquaint both forces with their operating procedures for counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations under UN mandate.
- **Indo-Malaysian Joint Military Exercise:** The first ever joint exercise between Indian and Malaysian armies 'HARIMAU SHAKTI - 2018' was held from April 30 to May 13, 2018 in the forests of Sengai Perdik Hulu Langat, Malaysia. 4 grenadiers from Indian Army and 1 Royal Ranger Regiment and Royal Malay Regiment participated in the exercise. The first ever such exercise between the two countries aimed at training of troops in counter insurgency operations in jungle terrain. It has laid the groundwork for future editions.
- **Indo-Nepal Joint Military Exercise:** 'SURYA KIRAN - XIII' was conducted in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand from May 30 to June 12, 2018. The battalion level exercise focused on counter terrorism operations in mountainous terrain.
- **Indo-Thailand Joint Military Exercise:** Indo-Thai Joint Military Exercise 'MAITREE' was held in Thailand from August 06-19, 2018. The exercise was aimed at training the troops in counter insurgency & counter terrorism operations under the United Nations mandate. Both sides jointly trained, planned and executed a series of well-developed tactical drills for neutralization of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario.
- **Multinational Joint Military Exercise SCO Peace Mission 2018:** India participated for the first time in the fifth edition of the joint multinational military exercise SCO Peace Mission between August 24-29, 2018. The joint exercise exhibited the combat power and dominance of the participating armies over extremist groups in simulated realistic situation.
- **Indo-US Joint Military Exercise:** The 14th edition of Indo-US Joint military Exercise 'YUDHABHYAS 2018' was conducted at Chaubatia, Uttarakhand from September 16 to 29, 2018. The two week-long event saw both the armies hone their tactical and technical skills in countering insurgency and terrorism in a UN peacekeeping scenario involving a combined deployment at a brigade level. The Indian contingent was represented a battalion from Garud Brigade, Surya Command while the US contingent was from 1st Infantry Battalion of 23 Infantry Regiment, 2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team and 7 Infantry Division.
- **Indo-Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise:** The third edition of joint military training exercise between Indian Army and Kazakhstan Army was held at Otar Military station, Kazakhstan. Ex KAZIND 2018, a 14 day long joint exercise was conducted from September 10 to 23, 2018. The Kazakh contingent was represented by Military Base 85395 while the Indian side was represented by 5 Ladakh Scouts Regiment. Both sides jointly trained, planned and executed a series of well developed tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario.
- **Multinational Joint Exercise of BIMSTEC Nations:** Military field training exercise for BIMSTEC nations, MILEX-2018, was conducted between September 10-16, 2018. A aim of the exercise was to collectively train BIMSTEC nations in planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations in a semi urban focus of the exercise was to train and equip the contingents to undertake joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in urban and semi-urban terrain. Training contingents comprised of platoon strength from 1st Gorkha Rifles of the Army and 32 Regiment from Japanese ground Self Defence Forces.

- **Indo-Japan Joint Military Exercise:** The first of its own kind, an Indo-Japan joint military exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN 2018 was conducted at CIJWS, Vairengte from November 01 to 14, 2018. The primary aim was to in and equip the contingents undertake joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in urban and semi urban terrain. The training contingents comprised of platoon strength from 1st Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army and 32 Regiment from the Japanese ground Self Defence Forces.
- **Indo-Russia Joint Military Exercise:** Tenth edition of Indo-Russian joint military Exercise INDRA was conducted at Sabina Military station from November 18 to 28, 2018. The aim of the exercise was to practice joint planning and conduct to enhance interoperability of the two armies in peace keeping and enforcement environment under the aegis of United Nations.
- **Indo-Maldives Joint Military Exercise:** Ninth edition of Indo-Maldives joint military exercise EKUVERIN 2018 was conducted at Maafilaafushi, Maldives between December 14-29, 2018. The Indian Army contingent comprised of officers and troops from the MADRAS Regiment while Maldives was represented by officers and marines of MNDP. The primary focus of the exercise was to train and equip the contingents to undertake joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in rural/ urban environment.
- **Officers' Training Academy, Chennai training Afghan lady officers:** As part of a continued effort of training being imparted by the Army to women officers from abroad, the women officers of the Afghan Army and Air Force were trained on basic military aspects including physical training, weapon training, tactics, communication skills and leadership at OTA, Chennai from November 26 to December 22, 2018.
- **Indo-China Joint Military Exercise:** 7th Sino -India joint exercise Hand-in-Hand 2018 was held from December 10 to 23, at Chengdu, China. Company size contingents of 11 SIKHLI from Indian Army and a regiment from Tibetan Military District of People's Liberation Army participated in the exercise. The Indian contingent was led by Col Puneet Pratap Singh Tomar, Commanding Officer, 11 SIKHLI, while the Chinese contingent was led by Col Zhou Jun. The exercise will consist of a balance of indoor classes and outdoor training activities: The aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance ability of the joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command. The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an international counter insurgency/counter terrorism environment under UN mandate.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

- **Floods in North Eastern States of India (June 2018):** Army columns were deployed for rescue and relief operations during floods and landslides in the north eastern states of Assam, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Approximately six lakh people were affected by the floods. A total of 430 people in Manipur and 930 people in Tripura were rescued by Assam Rifles and Indian Army.
- **Kerala Floods (August 2018):** Army columns were deployed for rescue and relief operations in the devastated flood affected areas Kerala's Kannur, Wayanad Kozhikode Malappuram, Idukki and Ernakulam districts. Indian Army deployed ten columns and ten Engineering Task Force (ETF) teams with 60 boats and 100 life jackets. Army also constructed 13 temporary bridges to reconnect 38 remote areas and evacuated 3,627 people.

Sports & Adventure

- **Asian Dragon Boat Championship:** Naib Subedar Suraj Singh Negi participated in the 5th Asian Dragon Boat Championship at Dali, China between May 05-08, 2018 as captain of 10 metre mixed 500 metre event and won bronze medal for the country.
- **Youth Olympic Games:** Jeremy Lalrinnuga, trained in Boys Sports Company, Army Sports Institute Pune created history by lifting total of 274 kilogramme of weight and winning first ever Gold medal for India in 62 kg weight category in the 3rd Youth Olympic Games at Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- **Asian Yoga Sports Championship:** Gunner (Operator) Sandeep Chate of Artillery Regiment bagged a Gold representing India and beating 15 other participants from different countries at 8th Asia Yoga Sports Championship held at Thiruvananthapuram between September 27-30, 2018.
- **Junior Asian Athletics:** Recruit Ajeet Kumar of Madras Engineers Group, Bangalore won Gold in 5,000 meter race in Junior Asian Athletics Championship held at Gifu.

Miscellaneous Events

President awards Padma Shri Sepoy Murlikant Rajaram Petkar (Retd): President Shri Ram Nath Kovind presented Padma Shri to Sepoy Murlikant Rajaram Petkar, retired war veteran of victorious 1965 war on March 20, 2018, who later won Paralympic Gold in 50 metre free style swimming. He sustained grave injuries, including multiple gunshot wounds but trained relentlessly and achieved inspiring glory.

- **Visit of President to Siachen Glacier:** President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, Supreme commander of armed forces, visited the world's highest battlefield, Siachen Glacier on May 10, 2018. He addressed troops at the Siachen Base camp and profusely praised the efforts of the soldiers deployed in the harsh climatic conditions assuring that their interests are paramount in the heart of the nation.
- **Army's Kashmir Super-30 (Medical) Initiative:** On June 12, 2018; a prestigious centre for Kashmir Super 30 (medical) project was inaugurated by the Chinari Corps commander, Srinagar. The project has been conceptualised by the Army which is a residential programme providing coaching and guidance to children for medical coaching and guidance to children for medical entrance exam for 12 months.
- **Samba Super 40:** Samba Super 40 Project under the aegis of Gurj Div was initiated to provide quality training to young NOA/CDS aspirants of Samba area as per UPSC curriculum. The project involved identification, screening and selection of potential candidates. Extensive interactions were done by Army officers of Samba brigade at Samba, Vijaypur and Kathua schools and colleges. 36 students were shortlisted out of which two boys and one girl have cleared the written exam. They will now be coached further for SSB.
- **Rescue by Indian Army in Arunachal Pradesh:** Indian Army rescued locals and tourists in 320 vehicles who were stuck in sub-zero temperature on March 12, 2018 in an unexpected heavy snowfall near Sela Pass in Arunachal Pradesh. Three teams of Indian Army worked relentlessly till the last person and vehicle were brought to safety.
- **Celebration of Parakram Parv:** Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi attended the Combined Commanders Conference at the Air Force Station in Jodhpur on September 28, 2018 and also launched 'Parakram Parv' there. He also paid homage to martyrs at Konark War Memorial in the city. In the visitors' book, the PM wrote that the country is proud of the Armed Forces who are dedicated and committed to protecting the Motherland. Raksha Mantri Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated 'Parakram Parv' celebrations at India Gate on September 29, 2018. The ceremony was attended by military and civil dignitaries and large number of school children and NCC cadets. Similar celebrations were observed at various locations around the country.

Defence Research and Development Organisation

- **Long Range Surface-to-Surface Ballistic Missile 'Agni-5':** During the year, Agni-5 was successfully flight tested thrice in Jan, June & December 2018. A total of seven flight trials have been conducted so far and all the missions have been successful.
- **Ballistic Missile Defence (Programme AD):** Interceptor missiles have been developed by DRDO as a strategic weapon against ballistic missile attacks. Successful trials of endo interceptor missile (AAD) and exo interceptor missile (PDV) were carried out in August 2018 and September 2018 respectively.
- **Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile 'Astra':** Beyond visual range air-to-air missile 'Astra' possessing high single shot kill probability has been developed by DRDO to engage and destroy highly manoeuvring supersonic aerial targets. A series of flight trials of the missile by IAF were conducted at ITR, Balasore as part of final development trials of the missile in September/October 2018.
- **New Generation Anti-Radiation Missile (NGARM):** DRDO is involved in the design and development of NGARM having a range of 100 km. AKU-58 launcher after suitable modification will be used for missile integration on Su-30 MKI aircraft. Successful static firing of integrated P-I & P-II rocket motor was conditioned at high & low temperatures in Jun & Jul 2018 respectively. Captive Flight Trials were also successfully conducted in September 2018.
- **Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM):** MPATGM is a 3rd generation ATGM with 'Fire & Forget' and 'Top Attack' capabilities, which can be day and night. Design & development of MPATGM weapon system is undertaken for deployment by Infantry and Parachute Battalions of the Army. During the year, sub-systems for control flight trial were acceptance tested and lined up for missile integration which was followed by successful Program Control Flight Trials of the missile system in September 2018.
- **Stand-off Anti-Tank (SANT) Guided Missile:** During the year, SANT Guided Missile mission-01 campaign was conducted during May 2018 at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan during which successful firing of SANT from Mi-35 helicopter platform was demonstrated. SANT Release Flight Trials (RFT) with mathematical model of seeker was also conducted in Nov 2018 wherein safe separation from Mi-35, transfer alignment algorithm, launch release sequence and latex/roll control auto pilot algorithms was demonstrated.
- **Smart Anti Air Field Weapon (SAAW):** SAAW is long-range, stand-off, precision air-to-surface weapon capable of engaging ground targets. Impact trial of SAAW was conducted in May 2018 to access penetration capability of SAAW in full configuration mode. Three tests of SAAW were also carried out during August 2018 from IAF aircraft. The weapon has undergone eight developmental flight trials till date.
- **Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) 'TAPAS BH':** TAPAS-BH, a multi-mission UAV is being developed with an endurance of 24 hours to carry out the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) roles for the three Armed Forces. It is being designed to operate at 30,000 ft Above Mean Sea Level (AMSL) altitude and is capable of carrying Electronic Warfare and Electro-Optic & Synthetic Aperture Radar (EO & SAR) payloads. During the year, a total of 63 taxi trials (LSTT & HSTT) have been completed. The first block of User Configuration flights commenced in February 2018. As on date, 25 User configuration flight trials have been completed.

- **9. Guided Pinaka Rocket System:** Guided Pinaka Rocket system is being developed by DRDO to engage targets from 20 km to 80 km range. The rocket uses propulsion system developed for Pinaka Mk-II rocket and has canard based aerodynamic control and Inertial Navigation System (INS)/Global Positioning System (GPS) based guidance. The system was successfully test fired from PXE, Chandipur in May 2018 and met all its mission objectives.
- **New Family of Munitions (NFMS):** Six types of munitions are being designed and developed by DRDO viz. Soft Target Blast Munition 'NIPUN', Anti-Tank Point Attack Munition 'VIBHAV', Anti-Tank Bar Munition 'VISHAL', Directional Fragmentation Munition 'PARTH', Anti-Tank Munition 'PRACHAND' and Jumping Fragmentation Munition 'ULKA' to improve the existing munitions and enhance its performance. During the year, PSQR based User Trials of PRACHAND was completed.
- **Arjun Armoured Recovery and Repair Vehicle (Arjun ARRV):** ARRV is intended for carrying out recovery, repair and replenishing functions pertaining to MBT Arjun in operational areas under a wide variety of field conditions. During the year, 1st prototype was successfully demonstrated during DRDO internal trials and 2nd prototype is under developmental trials.
- **Advance Light Towed Array Sonar (ALTAS):** ALTAS is an efficient sensing system for detection, localization and classification of submarines operating especially in the below surface layer ocean conditions. It is useful in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations and is the apt sensor for warships to locate silent submarines capable of launching high speed torpedoes. User Evaluation Trials of the system onboard INS Sharda are under progress. Almost 75 NSQR parameters including parameters pertaining to towing characteristics and functions of launch/recovery unit have been demonstrated during the trials.
- **USHUS – 2:USHUS-2 is submarine sonar** to be installed onboard four EKM submarines considering the long term requirements of the submarine arm and to combat the component obsolescence in the existing Russian sonars onboard these submarines. Design and development of engineered model of USHUS-2 is carried out in NPOL and produced at M/s. BEL, Bengaluru. During the year, Sea Acceptance Trials (SATs) Phase-1 of USHUS-2 onboard INS Sindhukesari was completed successfully in Russia.
- **Portable Diver Detection Sonar (PDDS):** DRDO/NPOL is involved in the design and development of a PDDS system that is capable of detecting small targets such as divers and diver delivery vehicles in and around harbours. It will be deployable and retrievable as and when required. During the year, PDDS deployment system has been developed. Field evaluation of the deployment system will be by early 2019.
- **Advanced Light Weight Torpedo (ALWT):** ALWT is an anti-submarine torpedo launched from ship, helicopter or fixed wing aircraft. It has dual speed capability and endurance of 25 km at low speed (25 knots) and 12 km at high speed (50 knots). During the year, discharge test of 70 kw battery was conducted with full torpedo assembled. Static test was conducted at sea off Vizag to prove operation of recovery aids used in ALWT viz. STRS, IPRS, Noise maker and BSAT. Automated electrical firing of it from single tube launcher and dynamic sea trials was conducted wherein torpedo made full run as per mission sequence.
- **Software Defined Radio (SDR):** The development of a family of network-enabled, interoperable and modular SDRs is to provide wireless secure communication capability to both mobile and fixed forces as required by the Navy are: Naval Combat (SDR-NC), Tactical (SDR-TAC), Airborne (SDR-AR), Manpack (SDR-MP) and Hand held (SDR-HH). During the year, Acceptance Test (ATP) and User Evaluation Trials of SDR-TAC were completed on five ships at Vizag. Flight trials of SDR-AR for selected bands were also completed.
- **Air Defence Fire Control Radar (ADFCR) 'Atulya':** ADFCR 'Atulya' in conjunction with anti-aircraft guns, forms a ground based air defence system whose main purpose is effective point defence against all air threats at short and very short ranges during day and night. During the year, DRDO evaluation of the radar system was completed and integrated test firing of ADFCR with guns and targets were carried out. 18. Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR):ADTCR has been developed for Army AD for surveillance, tracking and Identification of Friend/Foe (IFF) of aerial targets and transmission of data to multiple Air Defence command posts/weapon systems. During the year, DRDO internal evaluation of ADTCR system was completed. All the PSQR parameters were compiled and verified by demonstration/analysis. The system is ready for User trials.

YEAR ENDER-2-SCM-2018- Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs

- **100 Smart Cities selected in 4 rounds—SPVS incorporated in all** 5,151 Projects identified by Cities worth more than rs. 2 lakh crore under implementation in 100 cities 534 Projects worth rs. 10,116 crore completed
- **Implementation commenced for 1,177 projects worth rs. 43,493 crore** Tendering started for 677 projects worth rs. 38,207 crore 78 Indicators in 15 categories ranked 111 Cities on ease of living index Smart City fellowship & internship programs launched Cities challenge launched in partnership with AFD & EU to select 15 innovative projects URBAN RENAISSANCE: REJUVENATING & TRANSFORMING INDIAN CITIES, BEING ACHIEVED THROUGH INFUSION OF MORE THAN RS.6,85,758 CRORE
- **The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** has embarked upon one of the most ambitious programmes undertaken in the world for Urban renaissance for rejuvenating and transforming Indian cities through several initiatives including infusion of more than Rs. 6,85,758 crore for ensuring citizen friendly urban areas.
- **transformation** has been undertaken by way of implementing key urban reforms, projects for urban rejuvenation, construction of public and household toilets and solid waste management under the Swachh Bharat Mission, initiation and implementation of more than 5000 Smart City projects worth Rs.2,05,018 crore under the Smart City Mission, sanctioning of more than 65 lakh houses for construction under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in urban areas, provision of

water, sewerage and sanitation under the Mission AMRUT by sanctioning projects worth Rs.77,640 crore, augmenting the urban transport by way of new metro lines, embarking on an ambitious target for skill development of urban youth for gainful employment under DAY-NULM and approving implementation of city HRIDAY plans for 12 cities.

- **Ministry is also vigorously** pursuing reforms in the real estate sector for the benefit of homebuyers by ensuring implementation of RERA in all parts of the country.

SMART CITY MISSION

- **Under the SCM, 100 Smart Cities** have been selected in 4 Rounds based on All India Competition. All 100 cities have incorporated Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).
- **Since the launch of the mission** 5,151 projects identified by the cities worth more than Rs. 2 lakh crore are in various stages of implementation in the 100 cities. 534 projects worth Rs. 10,116 crore have been completed, implementation has commenced for 1,177 projects with a cost of Rs. 43,493 crore and tendering has started for 677 projects with a cost of Rs. 38,207 crore. The progress with respect to implementation of projects pertaining to Smart Solutions, Smart Roads, Smart Water, Solar Rooftops, and Visible & Impactful is given below.
- **For Smart Command & Control Centres projects worth Rs. 1,558 crore** in 11 cities have been completed; projects worth Rs. 3,049 crore in 29 cities are under progress; further tenders have been issued for projects worth Rs. 2,730 crore in 21 cities.
- **For Smart Roads projects worth Rs. 228 crore** in 4 cities have been completed; projects worth Rs. 3,819 crore in 34 cities are under progress; further tenders have been issued for projects worth Rs. 2,069 crore in 10 cities. For Smart Water projects worth Rs. 902 crore in 18 cities have been completed; projects worth Rs. 5,961 crore in 35 cities are under progress; further tenders have been issued for projects worth Rs. 921 crore in 17 cities.
- **For Solar projects worth Rs. 58 crore in 8 cities** have been completed; projects worth Rs. 828 crore in 42 cities are under progress; further tenders have been issued for projects worth Rs. 300 crore in 9 cities. For Visible and impactful projects, worth Rs. 179 crore in 16 cities have been completed; projects worth Rs. 3,701 crore in 32 cities are under progress; further tenders have been issued for projects worth Rs. 2,828 crore in 20 cities.
- **Value Capture Finance (VCF) Policy Framework** was released by the Ministry on 28th February 2017. It is an important tool for generating much needed additional finances required by the States / Cities for funding the infrastructural investments. So far 17 States have already engaged professional firms for preparing the VCF framework. This is expected to help the States generate additional revenue.
- **Other significant initiatives under the Smart Cities Mission** : The "Ease of Living" Index is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to help cities assess their liveability vis-à-vis global and national benchmarks and encourage cities to move towards an 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management. It was decided in June 2017 to rank 116 cities based on the liveability parameters. The implementation of the assessment commenced formally on 19 January, 2018. The Ministry has launched the outcome/rankings of 111 cities on the Ease of Living index on 13 August, 2018. The framework covers all the critical pillars of urban development (Physical, Institutional, Social and Economic) and uses 78 indicators across 15 categories (governance, identity and culture, education, health, safety and security, economy, affordable housing, land use planning, public open spaces, transportation and mobility, assured water supply, waste-water management, solid waste management, power, and quality of environment).
- **Indian Smart City Fellowship** and Indian Smart City Internship programs were launched on 9 July 2018. More than 3000 applications were received for Fellowship. The first batch of 30 young graduates/post graduates and PhDs in the fields of Urban Planning, Urban Design, Engineering, Information and Technology, Urban Mobility, Finance, Social Sector and Environmental issues has been selected by the Ministry in November 2018.
- **An all-India Challenge named CITIIS** (Cities Investments to Innovate Integrate and Sustain) was launched on July 9, 2018 in partnership with Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and European Union. A Loan of EUR 100 million will be extended by Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which shall be given as a grant to Smart Cities for implementation of 15 innovative projects selected through the All-India Challenge.
- **The projects** would be in four sectors- sustainable mobility, public open spaces, urban governance & ICT and social and organizational innovation in low-income settlements. Technical support with global expertise will be provided for preparation and implementation of selected demonstrative projects. A preparatory Workshop on CITIIS was held with international experts in September 2018. Proposals submitted by cities are under evaluation.
- **Smart Cities Digital Payments Awards 2018** were launched on 9 July, 2018. The objective of the awards is to guide, motivate, recognize and reward the Smart Cities for promoting digital payments and carrying out innovative payment initiatives. 65 cities have participated in Stage II of the questionnaire. The submissions are under evaluation. Results will be declared shortly.

UGC and AICTE have taken up Several initiatives to improve teaching quality in Higher Education

- **Government is serious about improving the quality** in teaching in higher education. In this regard, University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) have taken various initiatives. Some of these initiatives are as under:
- **(i) Diksha-** It is a platform for teachers which enables capacity building of all categories of teachers. It helps over 50 lakh teachers in improving the quality of education. Teachers upload their own material on the portal, which also offer online courses, allow sharing of best content, monitor progress and introduce energized text books with QR Code.
- **(ii) Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQUIP)-** This is a quality improvement program in technical education. In phase III, hill states of J&K, Himachal and Uttarakhand, 8 North-eastern States, Andaman Nicobar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and Assam has got Rs.2,600 crore. This ensures bridging the regional gaps in technical education. 1200 IIT and NIT graduates have opted for 3 years teaching in educationally backward regions. They have resumed their duties in 53 government engineering colleges where faculty vacancies were large. Thus 1,00,000 students get quality education which they were deprived off till recently.
- **(iii) Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) – Under GIAN, 700 professors from 58 countries have so far conducted about 1120 courses in specialized topics for students in Indian Higher Educational institutions. More than 40,000 students and associated Indian Faculty has benefited from this international teaching exposure.**
- **(iv) Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission for Teachers Training (PMMNMTT) – Under this scheme in-service training programs for more than 1,00,000 college and university teachers have been organized. Newly appointed teachers undergo six months pedagogical training, so they can make good rapport with students and the quality improves.** (v) **INTER UNIVERSITY CENTRES (IUCS) :** To improve the standards of higher education and research, the UGC establishes Inter-University Centres for Teachers Education within the university system under Clause 12(ccc) of the UGC Act.
- **Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT)** is a 40 hours programme with 20 hours of video content offered in a highly flexible format which can be done at one's own pace and time. The programme has built-in assessment exercises and activities as part of the academic progression in the course. At the end of the course, there is a provision for terminal assessment which can be either online or written examination. The course offered under the ARPIT programme is treated as equivalent to one Refresher Course for the purposes of Career Advancement. This helps in assessment of teachers.
- **AICTE has issued All India Council for Technical Education (Career Advancement Scheme for the Teachers and other Academic Staff in Technical Institutions) (Degree) Regulations, 2012.** Each faculty member submits performance based appraisal system(PBAS) in a performa as evolved by the concerned institution/ University duly supported by all credentials as per the Academic Performance Indicator(API) guidelines set out in these regulations.