Journey of a Thousand Miles begins with One Click!!!

NAMAMI GANGE PROJECT

- **Objective:** To integrate the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga river in a comprehensive manner.

- **Achievements:** · Under Namami Gange program, a total of 187 projects worth Rs. 16565.34 crore have been sanctioned for various activities such as sewage infrastructure, ghats and crematoria development, river front development, river surface cleaning, institutional development, biodiversity conservation, afforestation, rural sanitation, and public participation.

- · **Within a year of reconstitution of NMCG** as an Authority (October 07, 2016 to October 07, 2017), 44 projects worth Rs 7,547.87 crore were approved by the Executive Committee. These projects pertain to creation of adequate sewage treatment capacities in Ganga basin States – Uttarakhand (17) Uttar Pradesh (10), Bihar (11) Jharkhand (1) West Bengal (3) and Delhi (2). Total STP capacity of 1402.26 MLD will be created with the approval of these projects and sewer network length of 1429.24 km will be laid down.

- · **For abatement of industrial pollution,** survey of all 1109 Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) was conducted. Out of 1109 GPIs, 333 were closed and closure notices were given to non-complying GPIs.135 GPIs have been closed for non-compliance to stipulated norms. Eight Real Time Water Quality Monitoring Station (RTWQMS) are operational under National Hydrology Project.

- · **Six public outreach programmes were organised** in five main stem Ganga basin States. They are Ganga Swachhta Pakhwada, Ganga Sankalp Divas, Ganga Nirikshan Yatra, Ganga Dusshera, Ganga Vriksharopan Saptah, and Swachhta Hi Seva Pakhwada.

- · **The participation of corporates** in Namami Gange programme grew stronger with successful completion of two road shows – London and Mumbai. Commitments of participation in NMCG activities have been made by several corporates.

- **Water Quality Monitoring:** Based on water quality monitoring being carried out at 124 locations through manual as well as sensors based real time system, it has been observed that water quality trend on tributaries of Ramganga river viz., Bahela, Dahela, Kosi and Ramganga itself before its confluence with Ganga has shown improvements during the last two years.

PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA (PMKSY)

- **This programme has been formulated by amalgamating ongoing schemes** viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR,RD&GR), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) of Department of Land Resources (DoLR) and the On Farm Water Management (OFWM) of Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC).

- **Objective - PMKSY** was launched with an aim to enhance physical access of water on farm and expand cultivable area under assured irrigation, improve on farm water use efficiency, introduce sustainable water conservation practices

- **Achievements** · Prioritization of 99 projects for completion by December 2019 : Under PMKSY, Ninety Nine (99) ongoing AIBP projects along with their Command Area Development & Water Management (CADWM) works, having potential of 76.03 lakh ha. and estimated cost of Rs. 77595 cr, . have been identified for completion in phases up to December, 2019. Funding mechanism through NABARD has been made by the Government for both central and state share for timely completion of 99 prioritized projects.

- · **A Long Term Irrigation Fund** has been created under NABARD for PMKSY (AIBP) projects. The Government on 16.08.2017 approved the proposal for raising zero cost bonds up to ⬜ 9,020 crore during FY 2017-18 for keeping interest rate @ 6%. During 2017-18, CA of ⬜ 1,720.68 crore has been sanctioned for release through NABARD f or AIBP & Command Area Development works. Further, State share of ⬜ 3,390.37 crore for prioritised projects has been released through NABARD. In addition, an amount of ⬜ 1,297.58 crore has been sanctioned for release through NABARD for Polavaram Project of Andhra Pradesh during the year.

NATIONAL AQUIFER MAPPING AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME (NAQUIM)

- **Delineation and characterization** of aquifers for quantification of ground water availability and assessment of ground water quality to formulate aquifer management plans for facilitating sustainable management of ground water resources at regional and local levels.

- **Achievements:** Under the program, 7.99 Lakh km2 area has been covered so far against total target of about 13 lakh SQ Km till March, 2020. Aquifer maps and management plans being prepared by CGWB are shared with the State Agencies for implementation. Implementation of the management plans by the State agencies is expected to improve the groundwater situation.

- **Work done under National Aquifer Mapping Program** has been utilized for following successful activities which will reduce dependence on monsoon:

- § **Project on Tapi Mega Recharge** has been initiated as an outcome of Aquifer mapping study. This project envisages to recharge ground water to the tune of 358.92 million m3/ year benefiting an area of 2.3 lakh hectare.

- § **Multi layered aquifers identified** in intensely irrigated water stressed areas of Haryana.

- § **Managed Aquifer Recharge plans** for Chhatarpur Basin in Delhi has been prepared.

- § **Govt of Kerala** has initiated preparation of Panchayat Water Security Plans from NAQUIM outputs.

- § **Successful wells (18 nos)** were drilled in water scarce villages in Tikamgarh district of Bundelkhand region for State PHED.

- § **In Latur**, Maharastra, 25 wells drilled for drought mitigation in Year 2016 and handed over to state agency for water supply

NATIONAL HYDROLOGY PROJECT (NHP):

- **To improve the extent, quality, and accessibility** of water resources information, decision support system for floods and basin level resource assessment/planning and to strengthen the capacity of targeted water resources professionals and management institutions in India. Under National Hydrology Project, it proposed to establish National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC) as a repository of nation-wide water resource data. This data will be utilised for various applications such as development of decision support system, integrated reservoir operation, flood forecasting including inundation forecasting, Basin Modelling and development of Water Resources Management plans with aims to achieve the objective of Ensuring Water Security and disaster management.

- **National Hydrology Project (NHP)** has been taken up with the assistance of World Bank with total outlay of Rs.3679.7674 crore. NHP is a Central Sector Scheme, with 100% grant to the States with World Bank Assistance to the tune of 50% of the project cost. It has pan India coverage with 49 Implementing Agencies (IAs) (including 10 from Central Government and 39 from States). The project has a total duration of eight years from 2016-17 to 2023-24.

- **Status of Interlinking of Rivers** In compliance to the direction of Union Cabinet, MoWR, RD & GR vide O.M. dated 13th April, 2015 has constituted a Task Force for Interlinking of Rivers (TF-ILR) under the Chairmanship of Shri B.N. Navalawala, Chief Advisor, MoWR, RD&GR. So far, eight (8) meetings of the TF-ILR has been held and the last meeting was held on 15.09.2017. TF-ILR on 18.07.2016 has constituted a Group to look into legal aspects and required enabling provisions for implementation of Interlinking of Rivers and other related issues. The legal group has completed its assigned task and submitted its report to the Chairman, TF-ILR on 17th March 2017. In addition, a Group for Financial Aspects under TF-ILR was also constituted on 12.09.2017 to consider the financial aspects of ILR projects and to suggest the funding pattern for implementing the same. Three meetings of the Group were held so far and the last meeting was held on 08.12.2017.

- **Four priority links** under Peninsular Rivers Component have been identified for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPR) viz; Ken-Betwa link project (KBLP), Damanganga-Pinjal link project, Par-Tapi-Narmada link project and Mahanadi-Godavari link project. The preparation of DPR of a project is taken up only after consent of concerned State Governments. Based on the concurrence of the concerned States, DPRs of KBLP, Damanganga-Pinjal link project and Par-Tapi-Narmada link project have been completed.

- **PROJECTS COMPLETED BY WAPCOS** Afghan-India Friendship Dam Project, Herat Province, Afghanistan Development of Six Irrigation Schemes in Champassack Province, Lao PDR.

- · **Project Management for Augmentation of Water Supply Scheme** in Dar-Es-Salaam and Chalinze, Tanzania, Stung Tasal Dam Project, Cambodia.

- · **Preparation of Feasibility Report and Detailed Project Report** on Sewerage and Sewage Treatment for Bhopal City.

- · **Project Management Consultancy for Madhya Pradesh** Urban Development Project, Bhopal (World Bank Funded).

- · **Project Development** and Management Consultant (PDMC) for Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation including Project Management of Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.

PROTECTION OF MAJULI ISLAND FROM FLOOD AND EROSION

- **This project** was approved by the MoWR, RD & GR in March 2017 for a value of Rs 237 crores. Out of the total amount, funding of Rs 207 crores has been provided by DONER. Brahmaputra Board has awarded the work which is presently in progress. Successful conclusion of this project will provide succour to Majuli, which is the largest river island in the world, from flood and erosion.

- **MAJOR ACTIVITIES BY PENINSULAR RIVER WING.** In the year 2017 Dam Break Analysis were conducted on 64 Dams for preparation of Inundation maps. Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) prepared by State IAs have been reviewed and commented upon by CPMU

- **One Dam Safety Conference** was organized in Roorkee in which 466 delegates (with 30 International) participated. 35 Indian and Foreign organizations showcased their products, technology and services in the exhibition.

- **DHARMA,** web based dam inventory management software has been completed. Efforts are being made to capture the dam related data on this platform.

Family Law Reform

- **Reform family law:** As general suggestions to reforming family law, the paper discusses the introduction of new grounds for 'no fault' divorce accompanied by corresponding changes to provisions on alimony and maintenance, rights of differently-abled individuals within marriage, the thirty-day period for registration of marriages under Special Marriage Act; uncertainty and inequality in age of consent for marriage, compulsory registration of marriage, bigamy upon conversion etc.

- **Under Hindu law** the paper among other issues discusses problems with provisions like restitution of conjugal rights, and further suggests the inclusion of concepts such as 'community of property' of a married couple, abolition of coparcenary, rights of illegitimate children et al. There are further suggestions for addressing self-acquired property of a Hindu female.

- **Under Muslim law** the paper discusses the reform in inheritance law through codification of Muslim law on inheritance, but ensuring that the codified law is gender just. The paper also discusses the rights of a widow, and the changes application to general laws such as introduction of community of (self-acquired) property after marriage, inclusion of irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for divorce.

- **Under Parsi law** there are suggestions relating to protecting married women's right to inherit property even if they marry outside their community.

- **Adoption process:** The paper also suggests the expansion of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, to make it into a robust secular law that can be accessed by individuals of all communities for adoption. There are suggestions for amending the guidelines for adoption and also a suggestion to alter the language of the Act to accommodate all gender identities. The paper discusses lacunae within custody and guardianship laws, statutory or customary, and suggests that the 'best interest of the child' has to remain the paramount consideration in deciding matters of custody regardless of any prevailing personal law in place.

- **Special attention** to North- East: Although the sixth schedule provides exemptions and exemptions to states in the North East and tribal areas, it has suggested that efforts of women's organisations in these areas be acknowledged and relied upon in this regard to suggest ways in which family law reform could be aided by the state even when direct intervention may not be possible. Since a number of these issues such as polygamy, nikah halala, settlement of a Parsi wife's property for benefit of children, as well as the law on adultery among others is presently sub judice before the Supreme Court, they have been discussed in the paper.

Views on Uniform Civil Code:

- **The Law Commission** feels that a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is "neither necessary nor desirable at this stage."

- **Why is UCC is not desirable at this point?** Secularism cannot contradict the plurality prevalent in the country. Besides, cultural diversity cannot be compromised to the extent that our urge for uniformity itself becomes a reason for threat to the territorial integrity of the nation.

- **The term 'secularism'** has meaning only if it assures the expression of any form of difference. This diversity, both religious and regional, should not get subsumed under the louder voice of the majority. At the same time, discriminatory practices within a religion should not hide behind the cloak of that faith to gain legitimacy.

- **What is needed now?** The way forward may not be UCC, but the codification of all personal laws so that prejudices and stereotypes in every one of them would come to light and can be tested on the anvil of fundamental rights of the Constitution. By codification of different personal laws, one can arrive at certain universal principles that prioritise equity rather than imposition of a Uniform Code, which would discourage many from using the law altogether, given that matters of marriage and divorce can also be settled extra-judicially.

- **Way ahead:** Difference does not always imply discrimination in a robust democracy. A unified nation does not necessarily need to have "uniformity." Efforts have to be made to reconcile our diversity with universal and indisputable arguments on human rights.

- **What is uniform civil code?** Uniform civil Code is a proposal to have a generic set of governing laws for every citizen without taking into consideration the religion.

- **What the constitution says?** Article 44 of the Constitution says that there should be a Uniform Civil Code. According to this article, "The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". Since the Directive Principles are only guidelines, it is not mandatory to use them.

Department of Official Language

- **Department of Official Language:** With a view to ensuring compliance of the constitutional and legal provisions regarding official language and to promote the use of Hindi for the official purposes of the Union, the Department of Official Language was set up in June 1975 as an independent Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Since then, this Department has been making efforts for accelerating the progressive use of Hindi for the official purposes of the Union.

- **In accordance with the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, this Department has been entrusted with the following items of work:** Implementing the provisions of the Constitution relating to the Official Language and the provisions of the Official Languages Act, 1963 (19 of 1963), except to the extent such implementation has been assigned to any other Department. Prior approval of the President for authorising the limited use of a language, other than English, in the proceedings in the High Court of a State.

- **Nodal responsibility** for all matters relating to the progressive use of Hindi as the Official Language of the Union including Hindi Teaching Scheme for Central Government Employees and publication of magazines, journals & other literature related thereto. Co-ordination in all matters relating to the progressive use of Hindi as the Official Language of the Union, including administrative terminology, syllabi, textbooks, training courses and equipment (with standardised script) required therefor.

- **Constitutional provisions:** Part 17 of the constitution of India (Articles 343 to Article 351) makes elaborate provisions dealing with the official language of the Republic of India. The main provisions dealing with the official language of the Union are embodied in Articles 343 and 344 of the Constitution of India. The Official languages have been listed in the 8th schedule of Constitution of India.

- **Official language of union:** Hindi written in Devanagari script is the Official Language of the Union. The original constitution provided that for a period of 15 years from the commencement of the constitution, English will continue to be used for all official purposes of the Union.

- **The constitution made it clear that President may**, during the said period, by order authorize the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union.

- **The constitution** also makes it clear that even after 15 years, the Parliament by law may provide for the continued use of English for any specific purpose. The constitution has put all authority in the hands of the central government both for formulating and implementing the language policy. It is also special responsibility of the centre to develop and spread the official language (Hindi) of the union (art. 351).

- **The department has developed a computer software called "Kanthasth"** for translating the all kinds of official files from English to Hindi and vice versa to make the translation work simpler and quicker.

- **An E-learning platform called the "Pravah"** also being developed by the department for use in 16 Indian languages including English. Anybody can learn Hindi through his mother tongue with the help of this E-learning platform.

BIMSTEC summit

- **THEME OF BIMSTEC SUMMIT 2018:** The theme of the fourth BIMSTEC summit is 'Towards a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region'.

- **Kathmandu Declaration:** The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit concluded with an 18-point Kathmandu Declaration. The declaration is expected to enhance the effectiveness of BIMSTEC Secretariat by engaging it in various technical and economic activities in the region.

- **Key highlights:** The Kathmandu Declaration has underlined the importance of multidimensional connectivity as a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity of the region. The declaration also highlighted the importance of trade and investment as one of the major contributing factors for fostering economic and social development in the region.

- **The declaration** said the "fight against terrorism should target not only terrorists, terror organisations and networks but also identify and hold accountable States and non-State entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists and terror groups and falsely extol their virtues."

- **It asked all nations** to devise a comprehensive approach which should include preventing financing of terrorists and terrorist actions from territories under their control, blocking recruitment and cross-border movement of terrorists, countering radicalisation, countering misuse of internet for purposes of terrorism and dismantling terrorist safe havens.

- **It said that combating terrorism** and transnational organised crimes require sustained efforts and cooperation and comprehensive approach involving active participation and collaboration of the Member States.

- **The declaration** also recognised that eradication of poverty is the greatest regional challenge in realising development objectives and expressed firm commitment to work together for implementing the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

- **WHAT IS BIMSTEC SUMMIT?** The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising of seven member states in South Asia and Southeast Asia lying in littoral and adjacent areas of Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.

- **WHEN WAS BIMSTEC ESTABLISHED?** This sub-regional organisation came into being on June 6, 1997, through the Bangkok Declaration. It is headquartered in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

- **Composition:** It comprises of seven member countries: five deriving from South Asia — including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka — and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.

- **AMENDMENTS IN THE BIMSTEC ORGANISATION:** Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States with the acronym 'BIST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). Following the inclusion of Myanmar during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok on December 22, 1997, the group was renamed 'BIMST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting in February 2004, the name of the grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC).

- **Objectives of BIMSTEC:** BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization. Technological and economic cooperation among South Asian and Southeast Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal is its main objective. Starting with six sectors-including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries-for sectoral cooperation in late 1997, it expanded to embrace nine more sectors-including agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and

climate change-in 2008.

India Post Payments Bank

- **What is IPPB?** The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) is a public sector company under the department of posts and ministry of communication with a 100 per cent equity of the government of India, and governed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

- **Key facts:** It started operations on 30 January, 2017, by opening two pilot branches, one at Raipur and the other at Ranchi. India Post Payments Bank will offer 4 per cent interest rate on savings accounts. India Post Payments Bank will offer a range of products such as savings and current accounts, money transfer, direct benefit transfers, bill and utility payments, and enterprise and merchant payments. India Post Payments Bank has been allowed to link around 17 crore postal savings bank (PSB) accounts with its accounts.

- **What are payment banks?** Payment banks are non-full service banks, whose main objective is to accelerate financial inclusion. These banks have to use the word 'Payment Bank' in its name which will differentiate it from other banks.

- **Key facts: Capital requirement: The minimum paid-up equity capital for payments banks is Rs. 100 crore.** Leverage ratio: The payments bank should have a leverage ratio of not less than 3%, i.e., its outside liabilities should not exceed 33.33 times its net worth (paid-up capital and reserves).

- **Promoter's contribution:** The promoter's minimum initial contribution to the paid-up equity capital of such payments bank shall at least be 40% for the first five years from the commencement of its business.

- **Foreign shareholding:** The foreign shareholding in the payments bank would be as per the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy for private sector banks as amended from time to time.

- **SLR:** Apart from amounts maintained as Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) with the Reserve Bank on its outside demand and time liabilities, it will be required to invest minimum 75% of its "demand deposit balances" in Statutory Liquidity Ratio(SLR) eligible Government securities/treasury bills with maturity up to one year and hold maximum 25% in current and time/fixed deposits with other scheduled commercial banks for operational purposes and liquidity management.

- **What are the scopes of activities of Payment Banks?** Payments banks will mainly deal in remittance services and accept deposits of up to Rs 1 lakh. They will not lend to customers and will have to deploy their funds in government papers and bank deposits. The promoter's minimum initial contribution to equity capital will have to be at least 40% for the first five years. They can accept demand deposits.

- **Payments bank** will initially be restricted to holding a maximum balance of Rs. 100,000 per individual customer. They can issue ATM/debit cards but not credit cards. They can carry out payments and remittance services through various channels. Distribution of non-risk sharing simple financial products like mutual fund units and insurance products, etc. is allowed.

Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

- **Benefits of new designs:** The specially designed vessels will navigate on low drafts with high carrying capacity and at the same time, environment friendly. For the shipbuilding industry, the new designs will translate into a savings of Rs 30-50 lakhs in the building of a vessel. The designs will remove ambiguity on the class and type of vessels that can sail on river Ganga with efficient manoeuvrability. They will help shipyards build vessels of standardised dimensions and capacity and make them available off the shelf besides developing the 'sale and purchase' market for inland vessels. The designs will lead to reduced fuel costs and in turn lesser logistics costs.

- **These vessels** will sail even in depths of about two metres carrying about 350 cars on a five deck car carrier. Some of the designs would enable movement of bulk cargo carriers with capacity of 2500 tonnes at three metres depth, thereby, removing almost 150 truckloads of pressure from the road or one full rail rake with the plying of just one such vessel. The new designs will obviate the dependence of Indian Ship builders on foreign ship designs for IWT and prove to be a boost to 'Make in India' initiative of the Government.

- **Way ahead:** This marks attaining of a critical milestone in the growth of the country's Inland Water Transport (IWT) sector as it will help overcome the unique navigation challenges river Ganga throws due to its complex river morphology, hydraulics, acute bends, shifting channels, meanders and current. It will serve as an enabler for domestic shipbuilding industry working on inland vessels and open huge possibilities for cargo and passenger movement on National Waterway-1.

- **About Jal Marg Vikas Project:** What is it? The Jal Marg Vikas Project seeks to facilitate plying of vessels with capacity of 1,500-2,000 tonnes in the Haldia- Varanasi stretch of the River Ganga. The major works being taken up under JMVP are development of fairway, Multi-Modal Terminals, strengthening of river navigation system, conservancy works, modern River Information System (RIS), Digital Global Positioning System (DGPS), night navigation facilities, modern methods of channel marking etc.

- **Implementation:** The JMVP, which is expected to be completed by March, 2023, is being implemented with the financial and technical support of the World Bank. The project will enable commercial navigation of vessels with the capacity of 1500-2,000 tons on NW-I.

- **Benefits of this project:** Alternative mode of transport that will be environment friendly and cost effective. The project will contribute in bringing down the logistics cost in the country. Mammoth Infrastructure development like multi-modal and inter-modal terminals, Roll on – Roll off (Ro-Ro) facilities, ferry services, navigation aids. Socio-economic impetus; huge employment generation.

- **Know about IWAI:** Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is the statutory authority in charge of the waterways in India. Its headquarters is located in Noida, UP. It does the function of building the necessary infrastructure in these waterways, surveying the economic feasibility of new projects and also administration.

National waterways

- **NW 1:** Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system from Allahabad to Haldia was declared as National Waterway No.1. States covered under NW-1: States: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal.

- **Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydropower projects:** Pakal Dul: The 1,000 megawatt Pakal Dul hydroelectric power project on Marusadar River, a tributary of Chenab River, in Jammu and Kashmir will provide 12% free power to the state. The project will not only be the largest hydroelectric power project in the state but also the first storage unit.

- **Lower Kalnai hydroelectric power plant** project involves the construction of a 48MW (2x24MW) hydroelectric power plant. It will include the construction of a dam, tunnel, powerhouse, and substations and installation of generators and transformers and the laying of transmission lines.

UPSC=Fever

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Ministry of Labour & Employment - LABOUR REFORMS - ShramevJayate

- Minimum wages increased by 42% in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. This will directly benefit an additional 55 lakh workers. 7th Pay Commission: Benefited 50 lakh employees and 35 lakh pensioners.

- **The Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Act, 2015:** Enhances the eligibility limit for payment of bonus from Rs. 10,000 per month to Rs.21,000 per month Shram Suvidha portal: Unique labour identification number allocated, online registration of establishments. Unique Labour Identification number allocated to give permanent identity to labourers. EPFO issued 12 crores UAN out of which 3 crore have been activated using Mobile services. (As on 31.3.2017).. No. of KYC details digitally approved are 7.05 crore.

- **Amendments in Labour laws to exempt certain industries** from returns, labour registration, inspection etc. Amendment in factories Act, 1948 to allow for: Night shift for women, increased hours of overtime Apprentices Act, 1961 modified to ensure more apprentices. Stipend linked to minimum wages. ·

- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017:** To increase paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. For the first time, a provision for 12 weeks paid maternity leave has been made for both Commissioning and Adopting mothers. The act has approximately benefited 18 Lakh women employees. · Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017: Complete ban on the employment of a child below 14 years and prohibition on employment of adolescent (14-18) in hazardous occupation & profession.

- · **Implementation of Revamped Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Scheme** · The Payment of Wages (Amendment) Act 2017: Employers to pay the wages to employees in cash or by cheque or by crediting the wages in bank accounts of the employee.

- · **Digital Jeevan Praman Patra introduced for convenience of Pensioners** · Instead of only one bank i.e. SBI, the establishments have the option of making directed payments through 13 banks now.

- **Housing Subsidy to Beedi, Cine and Non-Coal Mine Workers** increased from Rs. 40,000/- to Rs. 1,50,000. Reforms in BIS laws to improve the standards of goods and services. National Career Service Project: bringing employers, trainers and unemployed on single platform, till February 28, 2018, 4.10 Crore jobseekers, 14.87 lakh employers registered and 8.43 lakhs vacancies mobilized, 3151 career counsellors registered on the NCS portal.

6th East Asia Summit and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting held in Singapore

- Commerce & Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu attended the 6th East Asia Summit- Economic Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM) and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM) in Singapore today. Singapore is currently holding the Chair of ASEAN.

- **The 6th East-Asia Economic Ministers'** Meeting was chaired by Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore, and was attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries and their eight dialogue partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The Ministers welcomed the higher global economic growth forecast for 2018 and took note of the increasing importance of trade and investment relations among the EAS economies. Acknowledging the potential for disruptions in the macro-economy that could affect overall market sentiments and global growth, the EAS-EMM forum expressed the hope that the economic linkages among the EAS members will enable them to address these challenges.

- **The Ministers agreed to the importance of keeping markets** open and fair as well as improving transparency and predictability of the business environment. The meeting recognized the importance of ongoing work to maximize the opportunities of, and address the challenges presented by, the digital economy and the rise of regional and global value chains, as part of their efforts to promote economic growth and integration in the region.

- **The 6th EAS–EMM was followed by the 15th ASEAN Economic Ministers** - India Consultation. It was co-chaired by Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore, and Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce and Industry, India. The meeting attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries took stock of the current level of trade and economic engagement between India and ASEAN and reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthen ASEAN-India economic relations. ASEAN has emerged as the second largest trade partner of India in 2017-18 with bilateral trade valued at USD 81.33 billion, comprising 10.58% of India's total trade with the world.

- **ASEAN Ministers also appreciated the outcomes of the ASEAN-India Business** and Investment Meet and Expo held on 22–23 January 2018 in New Delhi, that was organised soon after the 31st ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit and its role in providing a platform for both government and industry leaders to exchange views and provide ideas and solutions towards sustaining the momentum of trade and investment in the region.

- **It was also announced in the Singapore meeting that the next ASEAN**-India Business Summit will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2018 with the theme "Towards Building Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and India in the Era of the 4th IR and Digital Economy" which will be followed by the 4th India-ASEAN Dialogue Partner Expo and Summit scheduled for 21-23 February 2019, in New Delhi.

- **The ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC) presented their recommendations** to the forum to sustain the momentum of trade and investment in the region. Issues related to promoting connectivity, collaboration on Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development, blue economy, healthcare, and tourism as well as women and youth economic empowerment were discussed. The Ministers emphasized on the importance of promoting private sector activities and strengthening business-to-business relations, including through the AIBC, to further broaden and deepen ASEAN-India economic linkages.

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

- Accessible India Campaign- Sugamya Bharat Abhiyaan Objective: To make at least 50 percent of all government buildings in the national capital and all state capitals "fully accessible" for the disabled by July 2018.

- **Achievements:** · The scheme is ensuring a dignified life to Divyangs. · Special camps organized for distribution of Aids and Assistive devices to 3.24 lakh persons with disabilities.

- · **Access Audit of 1662 buildings in 50 cities completed till date.** · All 34 International Airports and all 48 Domestic Airports have been provided with accessible features viz. Ramps, Accessible Toilets, lifts with Braille symbols and auditory signals.

- · **624 out of 709 A1, A, B, category Railway Stations** and 12894 buses out of 1,41,572 buses have been provided with accessibility features. · 917 identified websites of State Governments/UTs are in the process of being made accessible through ERNET India. 141 State Governments websites out of 917 are made accessible.

- · **The Department organized Drawing and Painting Competition** for School students including Students with Disability on the theme of "Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities" on Thursday, 2nd November, 2017 at Bal Bhawan, New Delhi. · On 9th November, 2017, the Department organized an award function of Short Film Competition on Divyangjan Sashaktikaran in association with Directorate of Film Festival (DFF).

ADIP Scheme

- · 1188 ADIP camps organized and more than 1.94 lakhs Divyanjgans provided Aids and Assistive devices in the year 2017 · 1447 motorized tricycles provided and 404 (284 under ADIP & 120 in CSR) cochlear implant surgery conducted successfully during 2017-18.

- **Rajkot Samajik Adhikarita Shivir** · At Rajkot Camp aids and appliances to the tune of Rs.11.19 Cr. were distributed among 17589 divyang beneficiaries including 3000 beneficiaries who have received aids and appliances from the State Government amounting to Rs.1.53 Cr. So far it is the biggest camp in the history of the country in terms of the number of beneficiaries in a single camp for distribution of aids and appliances. · During the event 90 motorized tricycles, 1960 tricycles, 1541 wheel chairs, 77 Cerebral Palsy (CP) chairs, 2896 crutches, 3095 walking sticks, 529 Braille cane, 112 rolators, 162 Braille kits, 732 smart canes, 214 smart phone with screen reader, 68 daisy players, 20 ADL kits for leprosy cured, 2206 digital hearing aid, 1101 artificial limbs and callipers, 4416 TML kits and 73 laptops for person with intellectual disability were distributed among various classes of Divyangjan as per their need. The State Government on their own also distributed devices for rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities to 3000 divyangjans.

- · **Two Guinness World Records were created** in connection with the event. On 28th June 2017 a Guinness Book of World Record was created in the category of highest ever participation of 1442 persons with hearing impairment in a sign language lesson at a single venue while performing our National Anthem. Previously, such a record was hold by Taiwan (China) with participation of 978 persons with hearing impairment. The participants of this historic record repeated their performance in the presence of Prime Minister. · Second Guinness World Record was created in the category of highest number of Orthosis (Calipers) fitted to 781 mobility impaired persons on a single day.

- · **In addition to the above two Guinness Book** of World records, another new 'World Book Record' was also created in the category of World's Largest Disbursement of Aids and Appliances for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) at a single venue, in one day, involving 17589 persons with disabilities (Divyangjan). · A Mega camp was held in presence of President on 11.2.2018 in Gwalior. Apart from distribution of aids and assistive devices to 2436 Divyangjan under ADIP Scheme, aids and assistive devices were distributed to 1835 senior citizens belonging to BPL Category under Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojana .

- **UNIQUE DISABILITY IDENTIFICATION (UDID) PROJECT IN PROCESS** · The Department is in the process of implementing UDID Project with a view to creating a national database for Persons with Disabilities and also to issue unique ID card to every one of them. It will subsequently help in tracking the physical and financial progress of delivery of benefits and in terms of hierarchy at all levels on implementation from Village level to Block level, District level, State level and National level. So far more than 5.92 lakh disability certificates as well as e-UDID cards have been processed through this online mode in about 387 districts in 17 States / UTs namely Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Meghalaya., Haryana, Mizoram, Tripura and Bihar.

PRESIDENT PRESENTS "NATIONAL AWARDS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES -2017

- · The President of India gave away the National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), 2017 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, 2017 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 and Empowerment Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar and Shri RamdasAthawale also graced the occasion. · On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3rd December the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment presents National Awards on Individuals, Institutions, Organisations, State/District etc for their outstanding achievements and work done towards empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

- **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS OF DEPwD** · A National Consultation Workshop on Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities was organized on 3rd February, in New Delhi, to finalize strategy and action plan for skill development of PwDs. The workshop was organized in collaboration with National Skill Development Corporation, focusing on intellectual and developmental disabilities in addition to other disabilities. · The National Trust, in collaboration with Child Neurology Division, Department of Pediatrics, AIIMS, New Delhi organized the 2nd three-day Workshop for Training Master Trainers in Autism Tools-INCLEN & ISAA, from 9th-11th February, 2017 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

- · **The Department felicitated the team** that won the Global IT Challenge 2016 for Youth with Disabilities on 22nd February in the presence of the Minister and T-20 Blind Cricket World Cup winning team on 28th February in the presence of Prime Minister. · Indian Sign Language Research and Training Center, New Delhi has developed an ISK Dictionary for Deaf people and Hearing impaired people, offering them the words to learn and expressing their feelings, ideas etc. ISL Dictionary consists of various words for example legal terms, medical terms, academic terms, technical terms and daily use words. The videos are sub titled. This dictionary will not only work for deaf education but will also connect them with the society.

- · **First Indian Sign language dictionary of 3000 words** was launched by Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment in New Delhi at a function on 23.2.2018 at Indian International Centre, New Delhi. · The National Trust organized National Conference on Down Syndrome at PravasiBhartiya Kendra, New Delhi on 25.03.2017 in relation to the world Autism Day. The conference was inaugurated by Shri ThaawarchandGehlot, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment. · Five Regional Zonal Conferences were organized to discuss important schemes / Programs of the Department:-

Inclusive India Summit 2017'

- · To popularize the Inclusive India initiative in the country, the National Trust organized an 'Inclusive India Summit 2017' in VigyanBhavan, New Delhi on 12th September 2017. The objective of the summit was to bring together leaders from diverse sectors of the country and seek their commitment in changing India into an inclusive nation for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (PwIDDs).

- **Scholarships for SC/ST students** · Scholarships for SC/ST students – 3,30,64,900 student benefitted during 2014-15 and 2015-16 by distribution of Rs 7565 Cr · The allocation for the welfare of Scheduled Castes has been stepped up from 38,833 crore in BE 2016-17 to 52,393 crore in 2017-18, representing an increase of about 35%. · Under the scheme of Venture capital Fund, 36 proposals worth Rs. 135.91 Cr have been approved for Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs. · In order to include more beneficiaries, income eligibility criteria for 'Pre-Matric Scholarships for Scheduled Castes Students studying in Class IX and X' was raised from Rs. 2 Lakh to Rs. 2.5 Lakh, at par with Post-matric scholarship for next three years i.e. 2017-18 to 2019-20.

- **Reservation for Divyangs up** · Reservations for Divyangs in Govt. jobs rose from 3% to 4%. · Over 6 lakh Divyangjan have so far benefitted from 4,700 special assistance camps organized across the country since May 2014

SAKHSHAM

- · Scholarship scheme launched on 11th November 2014 to provide scholarship to differently abled students to pursue technical education

- **NIRAMAY Yojana** · Rs one lakh health insurance cover to people with autism, cerebral palsy and many disabilities Indian Sign language research and training centre established

- **Celebrations of 125th birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:** · 14th April declared as 'RashtriyaSamrasata Divas'. · 26th November declared as 'Constitution Day'. · Gramodaya se Bharat UdayAbihiyan- 14th- 24th April 2016.

The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- · Types of disabilities have been increased from existing 7 to 21. · Speech and Language Disability and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time · Acid Attack Victims have been included · Reservation in vacancies in Govt. establishments increased from 3-4% · Right to free education for children with disabilities of 6-18 years and Reservation of 5% seats for students with disabilities in Govt. and Govt. aided higher education institutions. · In order to promote accessibility in public buildings (both Govt. & private) and creation of National and State fund to provide financial support to PwDs. · Penalties for offences committed against persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

- **The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015** · Provides for the establishment of exclusive special courts for the speedy trial of offences of atrocities against the members of SCs & STs · To insert a new chapter relating to "Rights of Victims and Witnesses" · To impose certain duties and responsibilities upon the State for making necessary arrangement for protection of victims, their defendants and witnesses

Journey of a Thousand Miles begins with One Click!!!

'Krishna Kutir'

- Context: Union Ministry of Women and Child Development recently inaugurated widows' home 'Krishna Kutir' at Vrindavan in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. The construction of the home was funded by Central Government and it will be managed by the Uttar Pradesh Government.

- **Krishna Kutir:** Krishna Kutir is a special home for 1000 widows set under Swadhar Greh scheme and is the largest ever facility of its kind created by government organization. It was constructed to mitigate the plight of widows living in pathetic condition in Vrindavan.

- **About Swadhar Greh Scheme:** The Swadhar scheme was launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002 for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. The scheme provides shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls who are in need. The beneficiaries include widows deserted by their families and relatives, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters, women victims of terrorist/extremist violence etc.

- **Implementation of the scheme:** The State Governments/UT Administration invite applications from eligible organizations and the proposals which fulfil the norms are placed before a Project Sanctioning Committee (PSC) chaired by Secretary(WCD) of the State/UT concerned.

- **As per guidelines of the Swadhar Greh Scheme, to seek financial assistance the agency should meet following requirements:** The agency should be either recognized by State/UT under existing law or should be well known with the experience or working in the field for at least 3 years and its work should be reported satisfactory by the State Govt./UT Administration concerned.

- **It should ordinarily have been engaged in the field of women's welfare/social welfare for a minimum period of two years. Its financial position should be sound.** It should have facilities, resources, experience and personnel to undertake the management of such project. It should run Swadhar Greh on a no-profit basis. It should have facilities like computers, internet connection etc at Swadhar Greh.

Indus Water Treaty

- Context: India and Pakistan have agreed to undertake the Indus Waters Treaty mandated tours by their Commissioners in the Indus basin on both sides to resolve issues on the various hydroelectric projects, including the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai in Jammu and Kashmir. The recently concluded deliberations were held to further strengthen the role of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) for matters under the 1960 Treaty.

- **About the treaty:** Signed in 1960 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then Pakistan President Ayub Khan, the treaty allocates 80% of water from the six-river Indus water system to Pakistan. Beas, Ravi, Sutlej, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum from the Indus water system that flows from India to Pakistan. The Indus river basin spans parts of 4 countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and China) in an area that is more than 30% arid.

- **Under the treaty, control over six north Indian rivers** were divided between the two countries. India got control over the rivers Beas, Ravi and Sutlej whereas Pakistan got control over Indus, Chenab and Jhelum. This is a unique treaty involving a third party. It was brokered by the World Bank. A Permanent Indus Commission was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing. The Treaty also provides arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably.

- **Mechanism for cooperation:** The treaty sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two countries regarding their use of the rivers. However, there have been disagreements and differences between India and Pakistan over the treaty. The water commissioners of Pakistan and India were required to meet twice a year and arrange technical visits to projects' sites and critical river head works, but Pakistan had been facing a lot of problems in timely meetings and visits.

East Asia Summit

- Context: 6th East Asia Summit- Economic Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM) was recently held in Singapore. Outcomes of the meeting: The 6th East-Asia Economic Ministers' Meeting was attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries and their eight dialogue partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. Acknowledging the potential for disruptions in the macro-economy that could affect overall market sentiments and global growth, the EAS-EMM forum expressed the hope that the economic linkages among the EAS members will enable them to address these challenges.

- **The Ministers agreed to the importance of keeping markets** open and fair as well as improving transparency and predictability of the business environment. The meeting recognized the importance of ongoing work to maximize the opportunities of, and address the challenges presented by, the digital economy and the rise of regional and global value chains, as part of their efforts to promote economic growth and integration in the region.

- **About East Asia Summit:** The East Asia Summit (EAS) is a forum held annually by leaders of, initially, 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian and South Asian regions. Membership expanded to 18 countries including the United States and Russia at the Sixth EAS in 2011. EAS meetings are held after annual ASEAN leaders' meetings. The first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 14 December 2005.

- **EAS is an initiative of ASEAN and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.** EAS has evolved as a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture. There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS. These are – Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management, and ASEAN Connectivity. India endorses regional collaboration in all six priority areas.

- **Evolution of EAS:** The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad. The final report of the East Asian Study Group in 2002, established by the ASEAN+3 countries (i.e. China, Japan and ROK), recommended EAS as an ASEAN led development limited to the ASEAN +3 countries.

- **However, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM)** held in Vientiane on July 26, 2005 welcomed the participation of ASEAN, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, India and New Zealand, in the first EAS. USA and the Russian Federation were formally included as members of the EAS at the 6th EAS held in Bali, Indonesia on 19 November 2011.

- **Way ahead:** EAS, representing nearly 50% of the world's population and over 20% of global trade, is a mega gathering and is a testimony to the rise of Asia and how rapidly the world's politico-economic equations are shifting.

- **Facts for Prelims:** Following the 12th EAS in November 2017 in Manila, Philippines and following the adoption of the Manila Plan of Action, Maritime Cooperation has been identified as an important area of cooperation under the EAS.

ASEAN

- Context: 15th ASEAN Economic Ministers – India Consultation was recently held in Singapore. Singapore is currently holding the Chair of ASEAN.

- **Outcomes of the meeting:** The meeting attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries took stock of the current level of trade and economic engagement between India and ASEAN and reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthen ASEAN-India economic relations. It was also announced in the Singapore meeting that the next ASEAN-India Business Summit will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2018 with the theme "Towards Building Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and India in the Era of the 4th IR and Digital Economy".

- **It will be followed by the 4th India-ASEAN Dialogue** Partner Expo and Summit scheduled for 21-23 February 2019, in New Delhi. Issues related to promoting connectivity, collaboration on Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development, blue economy, healthcare, and tourism as well as women and youth economic empowerment were discussed.

- **What is ASEAN?** The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (more commonly known as ASEAN) is a political and economic organization aimed primarily at promoting economic growth and regional stability among its members. There are currently 10 member states: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam.

- **Why was it set up?** ASEAN was founded half a century ago in 1967 by the five South-East Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. This was during the polarized atmosphere of the Cold War, and the alliance aimed to promote stability in the region. Over time, the group expanded to include its current 10 members.

- **Regional cooperation was further extended** with the creation of the ASEAN Plus Three forum in 1997, which included China, South Korea and Japan. And then the East Asia Summit, which began taking place in 2005 and has expanded to include India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.

- **How important is the region economically?** If ASEAN were a country, it would be the seventh-largest economy in the world, with a combined GDP of $2.6 trillion in 2014. By 2050 it's projected to rank as the fourth-largest economy. Home to more than 622 million people, the region has a larger population than the European Union or North America. It also has the third-largest labour force in the world, behind China and India.

Public Credit Registry

- Context: Recently, RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya made a case for setting up a Public Credit Registry (PCR), incorporating unique identifiers: Aadhaar for individual borrowers and Corporate Identification Number for firms.

- **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.

- **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.

Conservation of Western Ghats

- Context: The six Western Ghats States, including Kerala, have been restrained by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) from giving environmental clearance to activities that may adversely impact the eco-sensitive areas of the mountain ranges.

- **Important directions issued by the NGT:** The extent of Eco-Sensitive Zones of Western Ghats, which was notified by the Central government earlier, should not be reduced in view of the recent floods in Kerala. Any alteration in the draft notification of zones may seriously affect the environment, especially in view of recent incidents in Kerala.

- **Background:** The Western Ghats Ecological Expert Panel had earlier proposed "much larger areas for being included in the eco-sensitive zone" though the Kasturirangan-led High Level Working Group, also appointed by the MoEF to look into the WGEEP report, had reduced it. The Ministry had accepted the Kasthurirangan report and issued the draft notifications on ecologically sensitive zones.

- **Need of the hour:** Western Ghats region is under serious stress. The region is one of the richest biodiversity areas which needed to be conserved.

- **Why was the Gadgil Committee set up?** Environment Ministry set up the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel under Gadgil. The panel was asked to make an assessment of the ecology and biodiversity of the Western Ghats and suggest measures to conserve, protect and rejuvenate the entire range that stretches to over 1500 km along the coast, with its footprints in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

- **What did the Gadgil Committee say?** It defined the boundaries of the Western Ghats for the purposes of ecological management. It proposed that this entire area be designated as ecologically sensitive area (ESA). Within this area, smaller regions were to be identified as ecologically sensitive zones (ESZ) I, II or III based on their existing condition and nature of threat. It proposed to divide the area into about 2,200 grids, of which 75 per cent would fall under ESZ I or II or under already existing protected areas such as wildlife sanctuaries or natural parks. The committee proposed a Western Ghats Ecology Authority to regulate these activities in the area.

- **Important recommendations of Madhav Gadgil Committee:** Ban on the cultivation of genetically modified in the entire area. Plastic bags to be phased out in three years. No new special economic zones or hill stations to be allowed. Ban on conversion of public lands to private lands, and on diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes in ESZ I and II. No new mining licences in ESZ I and II area.

- **No new dams, thermal power plants or large-scale wind power projects in ESZ I.** No new polluting industries in ESZ I and ESZ II areas. No new railway lines or major roads in ESZ I and II areas. Strict regulation of tourism. Cumulative impact assessment for all new projects like dams, mines, tourism, housing.

- **Why was Kasturirangan committee to set up?** None of the six concerned states agreed with the recommendations of the Gadgil Committee, which submitted its report in August 2011. In August 2012, then Environment Minister constituted a High-Level Working Group on Western Ghats under Kasturirangan to "examine" the Gadgil Committee report in a "holistic and multidisciplinary fashion in the light of responses received" from states, central ministries and others. Its report revealed that of the nearly 1,750 responses it had examined, 81% were not in favour of the Gadgil recommendations. In particular, Kerala had objected to the proposed ban on sand mining and quarrying, restrictions on transport infrastructure and wind energy projects, embargos on hydroelectric projects, and inter-basin transfer of river waters, and also the complete ban on new polluting industries.

- **Way ahead:** Kerala flood is a lesson worth of learning for India's disaster management system. India, having more than 7500 km of coastline, should have a strong disaster early warning and management system. Cooperation between the states can create an expert and integrated national structure, to manage any kind of natural disaster.

China-Maldives Friendship Bridge:

- Context: China-Maldives Friendship Bridge has been officially opened for traffic.

- **Key facts:** The bridge is an iconic project of the Maldives and China in co-building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The 2-km bridge connects capital Male and neighboring Hulhule island where the Maldives' main international airport is located.

- **Significance:** The bridge has made it possible for locals and tourists to transit between the two islands on land within five minutes. The China-Maldives Friendship Bridge has the power to unlock Malé's economy, and position China as a leading investor in Maldives' transport and trade for years to come.

Exercise Kakadu:

- Context: Exercise Kakadu 2018 will be held in Australia. KAKADU 2018 is the 14th edition of the exercise.

- **Key facts:** Exercise KAKADU, which started in 1993, is the premier multilateral regional maritime engagement exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and supported by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The exercise is held biennially in Darwin and the Northern Australian Exercise Areas (NAXA).

- **Exercise KAKADU** derives its name from Kakadu National Park, which is a protected area in the northern territory of Australia, 171 km south-east of Darwin. During the exercise, professional exchanges in harbour and diverse range of activities at sea, including complex surface, sub-surface and air operations would enable sharing of best practices and honing of operational skills.

Magsaysay Award:

- Context: Two Indians Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk are among six who have been declared winners of 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award.

- **About Ramon Magsaysay Award:** It is Asia's highest honour and is often regarded as the region's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. It was established in 1957 by trustees of the New York City based Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Philippine government in the memory of Philippines' third President Ramon Magsaysay.

- **It is awarded annually to individuals** or organizations from Asia region for their altruistic and philanthropic service. It carries Medallion bearing the likeness of the late President Ramon Magsaysay, cash prize and a certificate.

Raxaul-Kathmandu railway line:

- Context: India and Nepal have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on preliminary engineering-cum-traffic survey of the proposed Raxaul-Kathmandu railway line.

- **The MoU is the first step forward in the ambitious rail connectivity** initiative between the two countries announced in April this year. India's Konkan Railway has been asked to conduct a preliminary engineering-cum-traffic survey of the new rail line in consultation with the Nepalese government.

National Academic Depository

- Objective: To develop a Digital Depository for school learning certificates, degrees and other academic awards of Higher Education Institutions, on the pattern of a Securities Depository in line with the vision of Digital India.

- **The National Academic Depository (NAD)** was launched by the President of India on 9th July, 2017. The NAD is born out of an initiative to provide an online 24X7 store-house of all academic awards, viz. certificates, diplomas, degrees, mark sheets etc. of School Education Boards and Higher Educational Institutions on the pattern of a security depository in line with the vision of digital India and help in safe storage, easy retrival and validating the authenticity of academic awards.

- **As on 16th February, 2018, around 91.03 lakhs academic awards** have been lodged on NAD. About 330 academic institutions including School Boards have on-boarded NAD and about 30,000 students have already registered on NAD.

Swachch Vidyalaya:

- In response to the clarion call made by the Prime Minister on 15 August, 2014, the Department of School Education and Literacy launched the Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative (SVI) for the construction and repair of separate toilets for girls and boys in every school within a year.

- **The targets were fully achieved with 4,17,796 toilets** added to 2,61,400 government elementary and secondary schools during the year from 15.8.2014 to 15.8.2015.

- **This was achieved by a combination of effort from government**, public and corporate sectors and private contributions. This includes schools in the most difficult to reach areas in the country such as districts facing Left Wing Extremism (LWE), in forests, remote mountainous terrain and in crowded slums. With this, all 13.77 crore children in 11.21 lakh government schools all over the country now have access to toilet facilities.

- **Scholarships** As per the record maintained by AICTE, a sum of Rs. 292.50 Crore (approx.) has been released to 11,862 GATE qualified M. Tech. students. In addition, Rs. 2.61 Lakh have been released under National Doctoral Fellowship Scheme. Overall, a sum of Rs. 1076 Crore have been released to GATE qualified M. Tech. Students in the last three year.

GIAN

- Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) in Higher Education was launched on 30th November, 2015. The programme seeks to invite distinguished academicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, experts from premier institutions from across the world, to teach in the higher educational institutions in India

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

- The Ministry of HRD has embarked on a major and new initiative called 'Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds' (SWAYAM), which will provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses, using information and communication technology (ICT) and covering all higher education subjects and skill sector courses. Till date, more than 28 Lakhs learners have been enrolled in 1000+ MOOCs courses that have been run through SWAYAM.

National Digital Library (NDL)

- Ministry of Human Resource Development under its National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology initiated the National Digital Library of India (NDL India) project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility.

- **NATIONAL RANKINGS FOR HIGHER INSTITUTIONS** National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) launched to help Indian Educational Institutions to participate in the world rankings with greater confidence. ü National Institutional Ranking Framework-2018: 2809 institutions have participated in nine categories. This includes 301 Universities, 906 Engineering Institutions, 487 Management Institutions, 286 Pharmacy Institutions, 71 Law Institutions, 101 Medical Institutions, 59 Architecture Institutions and 1087 General Degree Colleges.

- ü **"India Rankings 2018"** have ranked institutions in the disciplines/categories mentioned above, and provided a common overall rank across all disciplines for those institutions, which have more than 1000 enrolled students.

- **Smart India Hackathon** A unique IT Initiative under which students are encouraged to apply knowledge to the real life situations and to find innovative solutions to the day to day problems Smart India Hackathon 2018 (SIH 2018) was launched on 16th October 2017. It includes 2 sub-editions – Software as well as Hardware: ü Software Edition- 36-hour software product development competition, similar in concept to SIH 2017. ü In the new Hardware Edition of the Hackathon, the teams work for 5 consecutive days and build their hardware solutions for the proposed problem statements. ü The Grand Finale of Software Edition SIH 2018 was held on 30th & 31st March, 2018.

- **RESEARCH &QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION** Research and Quality Higher Education: AICTE has released a sum of Rs. 11.77 Crore under Research Promotional Scheme in the current Financial Year. The scheme aims at promoting research in engineering sciences and innovations in established and newer technologies; and to generate Master's and Doctoral degree candidates to augment the quality of faculty and research. Under Modernisation and Removal of Obsolescence (MODROBS), AICTE has granted a sum of Rs. 16 Crore in the present financial year to the institutes for removing obsolescence in laboratories, workshops, etc. ü 5 New Research Parks at IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad and IISc Bangalore @ Rs.75 crore each approved.

IMPRINT

- IMPRINT initiative was launched by the Hon'ble President, Hon'ble Prime Minister and the Hon'ble Human Resource Development Minister in November, 2015 to channelize the research in premier institutions into areas that can have largest social and economic good for the country. Under this initiative, research projects under 10 selected domains are jointly funded by MHRD and other participating Ministries/Departments. These domains are: health care, energy, sustainable habitat, nano technology hardware, water resources and river systems, advanced materials, information and communication technology, manufacturing, security and defence, and environmental science and climate change. 142 research projects with an outlay of Rs. 323.16 crore for 3 years with joint funding from MHRD and participating Ministries in he ratio of 50:50 have been approved and currently under execution.

Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY)

- Hon'ble Minister for Human Resource Development announced in the IIT Council meeting on October 6, 2015 an annual investment of Rs. 250.00 crore with a view to promoting innovation of a higher order that directly impacts the needs of the Industry and thereby improves the competitive edge of Indian manufacturing. The projects envisages collaboration between the academia and industry – within or outside India. The overall annual investment would be limited to Rs. 250.00 crore each year. The funding pattern of the projects selected would be 25% by Industry; 25% by participating Department/Ministry; and 50% by MHRD. 87 projects at a cost of Rs.265.59 crore with joint funding from MHRD, participating Ministries and Industry in the ratio of 50:25:25 have been approved and currently under execution. Under UAY Phase-II, 65 projects with a total cost of Rs.139.48 Cr for a period of 3 years have been approved by the Apex Committee.

New Initiatives:

- 1. National Testing Agency: In pursuance of the Budget Announcement 2017-18, the Union Cabinet in its meeting held on 10.11.2017 approved creation of the National Testing Agency (NTA) as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct all entrance examinations for higher education institutions in the country.

- **2. Improving Gender Balance:** With a view to improving female enrolment in the B.Tech Programmes in IITs, a Committee under the chairmanship of Director, IIT-Mandi was constituted by the Joint Admission Board (JAB) to suggest suitable measures. The recommendations of the Committee were considered by the IIT Council in its 51st meeting held on 28.04.2017 and decided to increase female enrolment from the current 8% to 14% in 2018-19, 17% in 2019-20 and 20% in 2020-21 by creating supernumerary seats.

- **3. Project Monitoring Unit (PMU):** In order to effectively monitor construction of campuses of all higher educational institutions under MHRD, a Project Monitoring Unit comprising experts in the field of construction has been set up. This will monitor the quality of the construction at the one hand and ensure that there is no time and cost overruns in these high value projects.

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Draft rules for E Pharmacies

- Context: Ministry of health and family welfare has issued a draft notification recently on the sale of drugs by E-Pharmacies. The notification is about the amendment of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules amendment to enable registration of the e pharmacies and monitoring of their functioning.

- **Significance of these rules:** With this, Rs 3000 crore online pharma business will be regularised from the day of final notification. These rules have been proposed to ensure accessibility and availability of drugs to the people across India. After the rules are finalised, people will be able to get genuine drugs through these online pharmacies.

- **Highlights of the Draft:** All the e-pharmacies have to be registered compulsorily with the Central Drugs Standard control organisation. Psychotropic substances, habit-forming medicines like cough syrup and sleeping pills, schedule x drugs will not be sold online. Apart from registration, the e pharmacies have to obtain a license from the State government to sell the medicines online.

- **The application of registration** of e-pharmacy will have to be accompanied by a sum of Rs 50,000 while asserting that an e-pharmacy registration holder will have to comply with provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000). The details of patient shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person other than the central government or the state government concerned, as the case may be.

- **The supply of any drug shall** be made against a cash or credit memo generated through the e-pharmacy portal and such memos shall be maintained by the e-pharmacy registration holder as record.

- **Both state and central drug authorities will be monitoring** the data of sales and transactions of e pharmacies. Any violation of rules the registration of e-pharmacies will be suspended, and it can be cancelled too. The premises from which e-pharmacy is operated regular inspections will be conducted every two years by the central licencing authority.

- **Significance of the sector:** Patients can order medicines by uploading the prescription, and they will be delivered at home by the e pharmacies. As there are no distribution costs involved and the e pharmacies procured directly from the manufacturers, the price may come down by 20 to 30% han Maximum Retail Price.

- **All the transaction** will be done electronically which will encourage digital payments, and these bills can be tracked online for any misuse. Each E pharmacy shall appoint pharmacists with customer care which will create the additional jobs in addition to the existing offline pharmacists that are already giving jobs to the pharmacists.

WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

- Context: 71st Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia was recently held. About Regional Committee for South-East Asia: The Regional Committee for South-East Asia is the World Health Organization's governing body in the South-East Asia Region, with representatives from all 11 Member States of the Region.

- **It meets in September** every year to review progress in health development in the Region, formulate resolutions on health issues for the Member States, as well as to consider the regional implications of World Health Assembly resolutions, among others.

- **World Health Organization in South-East Asia:** The South-East Asia Region of the World Health Organization, established in 1948, was the first of its six regions. Home to a quarter of the world population, WHO SEARO provides leadership on health matters, articulates evidence-based policy options, provides technical support to countries and monitors health trends.

- **WHO South-East Asia Countries:** Bangladesh. Bhutan. Democratic People's Republic of Korea. India. Indonesia Maldives Myanmar Nepal Sri Lanka. Thailand Timor-Leste.

- **Facts for Prelims: WHO by a resolution, has delineated six geographic areas for regional organizations as follows:** Eastern Mediterranean. Western Pacific. South-East Asia. Europe Africa (South of the Sahara). The Americas.

Spain offers referendum on greater Catalan autonomy

- What to study? For Prelims: Geographical location of Spain and Catalonia. For Mains: Controversy and issues surrounding the demand for autonomy. Context: Spain's prime minister has proposed a referendum on whether Catalonia should be given greater autonomy, in a bid to dampen tensions between Madrid and Barcelona.

- **While stopping short of offering the wealthy region** a vote on full independence, this proposal will still be seen as an olive branch for many in Catalonia who simply want to see more devolved regional powers.

- **Background:** This comes in the wake of a political crisis last year when the Catalan government attempted a unilateral declaration of independence.

- **What's the issue?** Catalonia, which has its own distinct language, was granted autonomy under Spain's 1978 Constitution adopted three years after the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco.

- **In 2006, a statute granting even greater powers** to the northwestern region, boosting its financial clout, was approved by the Spanish and Catalan parliaments. And in a referendum at the time, over 73% of voters in Catalonia approved it. But in 2010 Spain's Constitutional Court struck down several articles of the charter, among them attempts to place the distinctive Catalan language above Spanish in the region and a clause describing the region as a "nation". The ruling sparked a rise in support for independence in Catalonia, which is home to some 7.5 million people and accounts for about one-fifth of the Spanish economy.

- **Where is Catalonia?** Catalonia is an autonomous community of Spain in the north-east end of the Iberian Peninsula, designated as a nationality by its Statute of Autonomy. It has four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona. The capital and largest city is Barcelona, which is the second most populated city in Spain.

- **How would a secession affect the Spanish economy?** The Catalan region has long been the industrial heartland of Spain, with textile and shipbuilding, and more recently, finance, services, and technology. Barcelona has a thriving start-up culture, and plays host to the annual Mobile World Congress, where the bleeding edge of technology is on display.

- **Catalonia is one of the wealthiest regions of Spain**. It accounts for 20.07% of the Spanish GDP. Secession would therefore cost Spain almost a fifth of its economic output, and trigger a row on how to carve up the €836 billion of national debt. If Catalonia were to secede from Spain, it would have a GDP of $314 billion, according to calculations by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). That would make its economy larger than Singapore and South Africa, and on a par with Israel. Its GDP per capita would be $35,000, which would make the average citizen of the Catalonian state wealthier than his counterparts from South Korea or Italy.

Ombudsman scheme

- Context: The Reserve Bank of India has tightened the banking ombudsman scheme with the objective to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism for customers.

- **New guidelines:** The banking regulator has asked all commercial banks having 10 or more banking outlets to have an independent internal ombudsman (IO) to review customer complaints that are either partly or fully rejected by the banks. The IO shall, inter alia, examine customer complaints which are in the nature of deficiency in service on the part of the bank, that are partly or wholly rejected by the bank. As banks should internally escalate complaints that are not fully redressed to their respective IOs before conveying the final decision to the complainant, customers need not approach the IO directly.

- **Internal Ombudsman Scheme:** The Internal Ombudsman Scheme of 2018 mandates banks to grant a fixed term of three to five years, which cannot be renewed, to the IO. The IO can be removed only with prior approval from RBI. The remuneration would have to be decided by the customer sub-committee of the board and not by any individual. The Ombudsman Scheme of 2018 covers appointment/tenure, roles and responsibilities, procedural guidelines and oversight mechanism for the IO, among others. The implementation of IO Scheme 2018 will be monitored by the bank's internal audit mechanism apart from regulatory oversight by RBI.

- **Who is a Banking Ombudsman?** Banking ombudsman is a quasi judicial authority, created to resolve customer complaints against banks relating to certain services provided by them. The Ombudsman is a senior official, who has been appointed by the Reserve Bank of India to address grievances and complaints from customers, pertaining deficiencies in banking services. It covers all kinds of banks including public sector banks, Private banks, Rural banks as well as co-operative banks.

EMIRATES MARS MISSION – HOPE PROBE

- Context: UAE has started its preparations for the upcoming Mars Mission named- HOPE. Background: In July 2014, the UAE leadership announced the launch of the Emirates Mars Mission project by the President of the UAE. Subsequently, the President issued a decree establishing the UAE Space Agency.

- **HOPE Probe:** The probe will be built by an Emirati team of engineers and experts and will be sent on a scientific voyage of discovery to the Red Planet. This will mark the Arab world's entry into the era of space exploration and place the UAE among the major scientific countries that have begun programmes to explore Mars. The probe will be sent to explore the Red Planet by 2020. Following a journey of several months, the probe is expected to enter the Red Planet's orbit in 2021, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the formation of the UAE.

- **Scientific Objectives of the Probe Voyage:** The Emirates Mars Mission project will answer scientific questions that have long puzzled scientists. These are questions about the Red Planet, which scientists have not been able to explain before because of the lack of data and information. The project will cover all aspects that have not been previously covered, whether scientific or knowledge-based, and it will work on drawing a clear and comprehensive picture of the Martian climate and the causes of the corrosion of its surface that has made it impossible for water to exist on the planet.

- **The project will also provide insights** about the weather on the Red Planet. It will observe weather phenomena such as dust storms and changes in temperature and how the atmosphere interacts with topography, from the highest volcano peaks to ice sheets to the vast deserts and the deepest canyons.

Drug-resistant superbug spreading

- Context: Australian scientists have warned that Staphylococcus epidermidis, a superbug resistant to all known antibiotics that can cause "severe" infections or even death is spreading undetected through hospital wards across the world. Researchers discovered three variants of the multidrug-resistant bug in samples from 10 countries, including strains in Europe that cannot be reliably tamed by any drug currently on the market.

- **Key facts: The bacteria, known as Staphylococcus epidermidis, is related to the better-known and more deadly MRSA superbug.** Where it is found? It's found naturally on human skin and most commonly infects the elderly or patients who have had prosthetic materials implanted, such as catheters and joint replacements.

- **Who is more vulnerable?** It can be deadly, but it's usually in patients who already are very sick in hospital. it can be quite hard to eradicate and the infections can be severe. Concerns: Some strains of the bug can make a small change in DNA that can lead to resistance to two of the most common antibiotics.

- **What is a superbug?** A superbug, also called multiresistant, is a bacterium that carries several resistance genes. These are resistant to multiple antibiotics and are able to survive even after exposure to one or more antibiotics.

- **What causes them to mutate like that?** Like any living organism, bacteria can mutate as they multiply. Also like any living organism, bacteria have a strong evolutionary drive to survive. So, over time, a select few will mutate in particular ways that make them resistant to antibiotics. Then, when antibiotics are introduced, only the bacteria that can resist that treatment can survive to multiply further, proliferating the line of drug-resistant bugs.

- **Why is Antibiotic Resistance a Big Deal?** The discovery of antibiotics less than a century ago was a turning point in public health that has saved countless lives. Although antibiotic resistance develops naturally with normal bacterial mutation, humans are speeding it up by using antibiotics improperly. According to a research, now, 2 million people a year in the US develop antibiotic-resistant infections, and 23,000 of them die of those infections.

- **Why is the medical community worried?** Basically, superbugs are becoming more powerful and widespread than ever. Medical experts are afraid that we're one step away from deadly, untreatable infections, since the mcr-1 E.coli is resistant to that last-resort antibiotic Colistin. Antibiotic-resistance is passed relatively easily from one bacteria to the next, since it is transmitted by way of loose genetic material that most bacteria have in common.

- **The World Health Organization (WHO)** is afraid of a post-antibiotic world, where loads of bacteria are superbugs. Already, infections like tuberculosis, gonorrhea, and pneumonia are becoming harder to treat with typical antibiotics.

- **What Can We Do?** First step would be to limit antibiotic use. If a patient has a virus, for instance, an antibiotic won't work, so doctors shouldn't prescribe antibiotics even if the patient insists. And when patients do need antibiotics, it's important to make sure they take the full course to kill off every last infection-causing germ. Otherwise the strong survive, mutate, and spread. As a society, curbing antibiotic use in healthy animals used in human food production is another important step.

- **Recent developments:** According to few recent studies, nanotechnology holds the key to stopping antibiotic-resistant bacteria and the deadly infections they cause. Scientists have developed light-activated nanoparticles — each roughly 20,000 times smaller than the thickness of a single human hair and have shown in lab tests that these "quantum dots" are more than 90% effective at wiping out antibiotic-resistant germs like Salmonella, E. coli and Staphylococcus. With the emergence of this Colistin-resistant E.coli, the medical community is going to be working harder and faster to contain superbugs and develop new treatments for infections.

- **Way ahead:** The global community needs to urgently address the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in an actionable manner, and fast-track research on the next generation of drugs.

UDAAN

- It is a project launched by CBSE in November 2014 under the guidance of Ministry of Human Resource Development; Government of India aims to address the low enrolment of girl students in prestigious engineering institutions and the teaching gap between school education and engineering entrance examinations by addressing the three dimensions of education - curriculum design, transaction and assessment. The project supports about 1000 selected meritorious girls from economically weaker section to prepare for the Engineering Examination while studying in class XI & XII. The aim is also to enrich and enhance teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics at Senior Secondary Level.

- **The objective of this project** is to provide a platform that empowers the girl students and provides better learning opportunities to them. As a result they are able to compete confidently in the entrance examinations of technical education institutions and eventually become important stakeholders in the technical growth of the nation. The programme UDAAN posed no financial burden on the students as the entire program is free of cost.

- **Students were guided and assessed during online weekend classes** held at 64 centers across the country on Saturdays and Sundays. In the year 2017, 632 girls out of 777 (session 2016-17, class XII) appeared in JEE (Mains) and 135 qualified for JEE (Advanced). For the session 2017-18,1019 girls were enrolled for class XI while 516 girls continued from the previous year and were promoted to class XI.

National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS)

- ü 3.81 lakh scholarshrps have been sanctioned during 2014-15 to 2016-17. ü 4.13 lakh scholarshrps have been sanctioned during the current year 2017-18 (as on 28.02 2018)

National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Scholarship (NSIGSE)

- ü 9.71 lakh incentive to girls have been sanctioned during 2014-15 to 2016-17. ü 9.73 lakh incentives to girls have been sanctioned during the current year 2017-18 (as on 28.02 2018).

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

- ü Rs.22,500 Crore earmarked for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. ü Under SSA. the RE for 2016-17 was Rs 22500 crore out of which 96.35% was spent. The RE for 2017-18 was allocated at Rs 23500 crore out of which 82.21% has been released as on 28 02.2018. The BE for 2018-19 has been increased by 11.2% to Rs 26128.81 crore

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NITI Aayog

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) & Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) Launch Date: Approved by Cabinet on 24 February 2016

- **Objective: Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** including Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) is Government of India's endeavour to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Its objective is to serve as a platform for promotion of world-class Innovation Hubs, Grand Challenges, Start-up businesses and other self-employment activities, particularly in technology driven areas.

Lucky Grahak Yojana

- Launch Date: 25.12.2016

- **Objective:** To Promote & Reward Digital Payments through cash prizes for consumers

Digi-dhan Vyapar Yojana

- Launch Date: 25.12.2016

- **Objective:** To Promote & Reward Digital Payments through cash prizes for merchants

Launch of BHIM App (Bharat Interface for Money Application)

- Launch Date: 30.12.2016

- **Objective:** An indigenous digital payments app BHIM for fast and secure cashless transactions using mobiles. BHIM is a payment platform designed to make UPI and USSD payment modes simpler and usable across feature phones and Smart phones.

- **Achievements:** BHIM App downloads reach 1.25 Crore on 19.1.2017(from Budget)

Make In India

- Objective: A Government initiative launched by PM Narendra Modi to encourage multi-national, as well as national companies to manufacture their products in India. It aims at promoting exploration, private sector participation and growth through investments.

- **Achievements:** · The positive business environment has helped to continue the growth of the FDI. The FDI equity inflows in the first two quarters of Financial Year (FY) 2016-17 were 30% higher than those recorded last year.

- · **Mining:** FDI equity Inflows: FDI equity inflows in the sector increased by 1606% to USD 1.2 billion during Apr 2014 - Mar 2016 compared to USD 70.62 million during Apr 2012 - Mar 2014.

- · **Apparel:** Between March 2014 and March 2016 the FDI equity inflows in the Textiles sector added up to USD 427.55 million. FDI equity inflow, grew by 16% in FY 2015-16 over FY 2013-14

- · **New and Renewable Energy:** To meet the rising demand and manage the gaps in capacity of trained manpower, the Government in May 2015 set a target of achieving 50,000 "Surya Mitras" of skilled manpower in solar energy sector by 2019-20. 5,492 Surya Mitras have been trained under the program as on September 30, 2016 with over 150 institutes across the country implementing the Surya Mitra program and creating job opportunities for unemployed youth. Currently, 3000 are undergoing training.

- · **Total FDI equity inflow** in the non-conventional energy sector during April 2014 to September 2016 was USD 1.77 billion.

Digital India

- Objective: To deliver Government services to citizens electronically by improving online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity. Digital India consists of three core components- Creation of digital infrastructure; Delivery of services digitally; Digital literacy.

- **Achievements:** · For the BharatNet Project, the allocation has been stepped up to Rs.10,000 crores in 2017-18. 1,55,000 kms of Optical Fiber Cables have been laid down to connect gram panchayats. Over 82% Indians can access telecommunication Services in the country.

- · **By the end of 2017-18**, high speed broadband connectivity on optical fiber will be available in more than 1, 50,000 gram panchayats, with wifi hot spots and access to digital services at low tariffs. http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157859

Significant Achievements of NITI Aayog

- v Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital Furthering the agenda for cooperative federalism, NITI Aayog launched SATH, a program providing 'Sustainable Action for Transforming Human capital' to work with the State Governments. The aim is to initiate transformation in education and health by handholding states to improve their social sector indicators. The program will also address States' need for technical support.

- **In its first phase, the SATH initiative will be implemented in six States. NITI has selected Uttar Pradesh**, Assam, and Karnataka to improve healthcare delivery and key health indicators. In education, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Jharkhand have been selected to better learning outcomes. The six States have been chosen after a rigorous competitive process based on comprehensive metrics to determine potential for impact and likelihood of success.

- **These six states are being built as 'role models' for health and education systems in India.** NITI is working in close collaboration with the state machinery to design a robust roadmap of intervention, develop a program governance structure, set up monitoring and tracking mechanisms and provide support on a range of institutional measures.

- **The program will be implemented by NITI along with McKinsey & Company and IPE Global consortium, who have been selected** through a competitive bidding process. All stakeholders involved in the programme will be under pressure to initiate reforms or processes which will show improvement in education and learning outcomes from the day of signing of the MOU with NITI.

National Nutrition Strategy

- Formulated through an extensive consultative process, the National Nutrition Strategy provides the rationale and roadmap to bring nutrition to the centre stage of India's Development Agenda. It provides an action plan to tackle malnutrition and meet the country's nutrition needs and targets.

- **It charts out a framework wherein the four proximate determinants of nutrition – uptake of health services**, food, drinking water & sanitation and income & livelihoods – work together to accelerate decline of under nutrition in India. It prioritises real time measurement of these determinants for targeted action among the most vulnerable mothers and children. It recommends that States create customized State/ District Action Plans to address local needs and challenges.

- **This is especially relevant in view of enhanced resources available with the States, to prioritise focussed** interventions with agreater role for panchayats and urban local bodies. The strategy also enables states to make strategic choices, through decentralized planning and local innovation, with accountability for nutrition outcomes. Supply side challenges often overshadow the need to address behavioural change efforts to generate demand for nutrition services.

- **v Closure of Sick Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)** The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) asked NITI Aayog to undertake a thorough analysis of sick CPSEs and make recommendations on their future direction. Accordingly, the Aayog launched a two-layer process whereby a committee headed by the CEO undertook a detailed analysis of the 74 sick/loss-making CPSEs with the assistance of the National Institute for Public Finance and Policy. This committee reported its findings to a committee headed by the Vice Chairman. A report was prepared with the recommendations and sent to the PMO. Until now, Cabinet has given approval for the closure of 12 such CPSEs/units. The process of finalising the closure of other sick CPSEs is currently under way.

- **v Strategic Disinvestment of CPSEs** The budget announcement 2016-17 had mandated that the NITI Aayog identify CPSEs for strategic disinvestment. The task inter alia included: (i) Identification of CPSEs for strategic sale (ii) Advice on number of shares to be transferred (iii) Recommendation on mode of sale (iv) Suggestion on the methods of valuation

- · **To perform this role, NITI Aayog constituted a Committee under chairmanship of Vice Chairman**, NITI Aayog. Until now, the Committee has submitted its recommendations in four tranches between May 2016 and May 2017.

- · **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved seventeen of the committee's recommendations** for 'in-principle' strategic disinvestment in October 2016. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) is in the process of implementing the recommendations on a case-by-case basis. The Committee is now deliberating on the third tranche of recommendations.

- · **In March 2016, a Committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog** to review the status of 74 sick/loss-making and non-performing CPSEs. The Committee finalised its report in May 2016 and its recommendation are in the process of being implemented in consultation with the concerned administrative ministries.

- · **Work on the committee to monitor the revival packages of all CPSEs, under the chairmanship** of Shri Bibek Debroy, Member, NITI Aayog, is under progress.

- · **The steps towards Strategic Disinvestment of CPSEs are the first of their kind being taken after 13 years** by the Government. NITI Aayog's work on CPSEs has covered more than half of the 235 operational CPSEs and is the most comprehensive review of the working of CPSEs, with a view to inject them with greater efficient, in recent times.

Reforms in Agriculture:

- a. Model Land Leasing Law Taking note of increasing incidents of leasing in and out of land and suboptimal use of land with lesser number of cultivators, NITI Aayog has formulated a Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016 to both recognize the rights of the tenant and safeguard interest of landowners. A dedicated cell for land reforms was also set up in NITI. Based on the model act, Madhya Pradesh has enacted separate land leasing law and Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have modified their land leasing laws. Some States, including Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, are already at an advance stage of formulating legislations to enact their land leasing laws for agriculture.

- **b. Reforms of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act** NITI Aayog consulted with the States on 21 October 2016 on three critical reforms – (i) Agricultural marketing reforms (ii) Felling and transit laws for tree produce grown at private land (iii) Agricultural land leasing

- **Subsequently, Model APMC Act version 2 prepared. States are being consulted to adopt APMC Act version 2.** c. Agricultural Marketing and Farmer Friendly Reforms Index NITI Aayog has developed the first ever 'Agriculture Marketing and Farmer Friendly Reforms Index' to sensitise states about the need to undertake reforms in the three key areas of Agriculture Market Reforms, Land Lease Reforms and Forestry on Private Land (Felling and Transit of Trees). The index carries a score with a minimum value "0" implying no reforms and maximum value "100" implying complete reforms in the selected areas.

- **As per NITI Aayog's index, Maharashtra ranks highest in implementation of various agricultural reforms**. The State has implemented most of the marketing reforms and offers the best environment for undertaking agri-business among all the States and UTs. Gujarat ranks second with a score of 71.50 out of 100, closely followed by Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Almost two third States have not been able to reach even the halfway mark of reforms score, in the year 2016-17. The index aims to induce a healthy competition between States and percolate best practices in implementing farmer-friendly reforms.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana

- A roadmap for Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana was prepared and shared with the concerned Central Ministries/Departments, the States and other stakeholders. The road-map would be highly useful for achieving the objective of Har Khet Ko Pani as it contains strategies for storage, conveyance and on-farm application of water with emphasis on efficient and sustainable use of available water resources. In the road-map, priority has been accorded to completion of ongoing projects under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP); minor irrigation (surface water) schemes; Repair, Renovation and Restoration of waterbodies; and also for bridging the gap between the Irrigation Potential Created (IPC) and Irrigation Potential Utilised (IPU).

- **v Launching of Development Support Services to States for Infrastructure** This program has been initiated to transform delivery of projects/services by providing state-of-the-art expertise in situational diagnostics, project structuring, business process re-engineering, overhauling delivery and governance processes, undertaking design and techno-commercial feasibility of complex projects and supporting in implementation to achieve the desired outcomes.

- **NITI Aayog has shortlisted 40 out of 419 projects** for pre- feasibility. Among all projects submitted by 18 states, Among the projects that were screened a majority belonged to the water and sanitation sector and social infrastructure sector followed by transportation and commercial infrastructure.

- **v Reforming Regulatory Frameworks in Medical Education** A committee chaired by Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog recommended scrapping of the Medical Council of India and suggested a new body for regulating medical education. The draft legislation for the proposed National Medical Commission has been submitted to the Government for further necessary action

Digital Payments Movement

- a. After being entrusted with the task of promoting less-cash society, NITI Aayog launched a campaign to promote digital payments. An action plan on advocacy, awareness and co-ordination of handholding efforts among general public, micro enterprises and other stakeholders was prepared. Appropriate literature in print and multimedia was prepared on the subject for widespread dissemination. Presentations/ interactions were organized by NITI Aayog for training and capacity building of various Ministries/Departments of Government of India, representatives of State/UTs, Trade and Industry Bodies as well as all other stakeholders.

- **b. Committee of Chief Ministers on Digital Payments was constituted on 30th November 2016 with Hon'ble Chief Minister** of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, as the Convener to promote transparency, financial inclusion and a healthy financial ecosystem nationwide. The Committee submitted its interim report to Hon'ble Prime Minister in January 2017. Several of the recommendations of the Committee have since been implemented.

- **c. To incentivize the States/UTs to promote digital transactions, a scheme was launched under which** Central assistance was provided to the districts for undertaking Information, Education and Communication activities to bring 5 crore Jan Dhan accounts to digital platform. Out of Rs. 50 crore allocated for the scheme, a sum of Rs. 21.32 crore has since been disbursed.

- **d. NITI Aayog prepared the guidelines for the cashback and referral bonus schemes which was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister** on 14.4.2017 to promote the use of digital payments through the BHIM App.

- **e. Niti Aayog also launched two incentive schemes to to promote digital payments across all sections of society** - the Lucky Grahak Yojana and the Digi Dhan Vyapar Yojana –Over 16 lakh consumers and merchants won cash reward amounting to Rs. 256 crore under these two schemes .

- **f. Digi Dhan Melas were held for 100 days in 100 cities, from December 25th to April 14th.**

- **g. NITI Aayog also launched an initiative of less-cash townships wherein through targeted steps digital transactions was promoted**. Through third party verification 75 townships were certified as less-cash townships where more than 80 per cent of transactions within the townships were through digital mode. Hon'ble Prime Minister declared these as less-cash townships on April 14, 2017.

Atal Innovation Mission

- The Government has set up Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in NITI Aayog with a view to strengthen the country's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem by creating institutions and programs that spur innovation in schools, colleges, and entrepreneurs in general. In 2016-17, the following major schemes were rolled out:

- **a. Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs):** To foster creativity and scientific temper in students, AIM is helping to establish 1500 ATLs in schools across India, where students can design and make small prototypes to solve challenges they see around them, using rapid prototyping technologies that have emerged in recent years.

- **b. Atal Incubation Centres (AICs):** AIM will provide financial support of Rs.10 crore and capacity buidling for setting AICs across India, which will help startups expand quicker and enable innovation-entrepreneurship, in core sectors such as manufacturing, transport, energy, education, agriculture, water and sanitation, etc.

- **c. Six Existing Incubation Centres (EIC)** have been selected through a competitive process for scaling them up as World Class Institutes and ten new Atal Incubation Centres have been selected.

- **v Indices Measuring States' Performance in Health, Education and Water Management**

- **As part of the Prime Minister's Focus on outcomes,** NITI has come out with indices to measure incremental annual outcomes in critical social sectors like health, education and water with a view to nudge the states into competing with each other for better outcomes, while at the same time sharing best practices & innovations to help each other - an example of competitive and cooperative federalism.

- **v Special initiatives for transformation of 100 districts:** As rapid transformation of the country would require a major jump in human development indices, Niti Aayog is in the process of launching a special initiative to focus on 100 such districts which still fare poorly on key indicators like health, education, basic infrastructure and have a higher per cent of people under poverty. The strategy is to designate senior officers as guardian of the districts who with the district and State level officials ensure that various Schemes of Governments are efficiently run and through the convergence o the effort of the centre, State and local government bring about a major improvement in next 2 years across key indicators.

- **v Three Year Action Agenda** Replacing the Five Year Plans beyond 31st March, 2017, NITI Aayog drafted the 3-year Action Agenda for 2017-18 to 2019-20, aligned to the predictability of financial resources during the 14th Finance Commission Award period. This was submitted at the 3rd Governing Council Meeting, chaired by the Hon'ble PM on April 23rd, 2017 for inputs from all Chief Minister and the final version was released by the Hon'ble Finance Minister in July, 2017.

- **v Think Tank Role:** As the premier think-tank of the Government of India, NITI Aayog has: a. Created a compendium "State Forward: Best Practices from Our States" with an exhaustive set of case studies that reflect the States' best practices across all themes

- **b. Developed the Good Practices Resource Book (2015)** to consolidate the innovative Good Practices in Social Security, Infrastructure, Child Protection and Local Governance

- **c. Steered the creation of a full-fledged** Knowledge Portal to share these practices from across sectors and States: www.indiaknowledgehub.gov.in

- **d. Launched 'SAMAVESH'**, a crucial initiative aimed at networking and partnership with knowledge and research institutions using a hub and spoke model. 32 Institutions including AIIMS, IIT-K, IIT-KGP, IIM-A and IISc have been identified for partnership in the first phase representing premier think tanks across 7 themes viz. Economic Transformation, Natural Resources & Environment, Area Transformation, Social Sector, Science & Technology, Governance Reform and Defence

- **e. Prepared the Challenge Method Guidelines** for Selection of sites for various projects; sent for approval by the Cabinet Secretariat

- **f. Steered several efforts** to rejuvenate the fertilizer sector, with the CEO chairing six Committees for revival of closed fertilizer plants, selection of technology, reforms in the urea sector and introduction of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in fertilizers

- **g. Set up a committee** to review Autonomous Bodies under the Central Government. The Committee has, so far, completed the review of a few departments and submitted the first draft Interim report to the Government

- **h. Prepared a roadmap to promote** Tribal Research Institutes as Top Class Research Institutes. The report of the sub-group is being examined for necessary action

Co-operative Federalism:

- a. The consolidation of laws for Rajasthan has been done and the work for Jammu & Kashmir and Maharashtra is in progress.

- **b. Compilation of District level disaggregated** data on 51 development indicators including Social Development Indicators such as Education, Health, Roads, Electricity, Mobile Penetration etc for monitoring the improvement of States.

- **v Development support to the North East:** To transform India's North-Eastern region into a driver of growth, NITI Aayog has undertaken the following initiatives:

- **a. A manufacturing policy** for the North-Eastern and Himalayan States is being formulated

- **c. Issues arising out of FFC recommendations have been taken and Rs. 500 cr and Rs. 150 cr** released to Sikkim and Tripura, respectively. Release was Rs. 1000 crore for Autonomous District Councils of Sixth Schedule areas was recommended for 2015-16. In 2017-18, Rs. 500 cr will be granted to local bodies that are not covered under FFC recommendations.

- **b. c. Enabled the sorting out bottlenecks of hydel projects in Arunachal Pradesh** d. Consultation workshop on implementing Vision 2030 organized for North Eastern States e. Formulating strategies to meet the objective of Act East Policy.

Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) Corridor project

- · Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) Corridor project: The governments of India and Japan inked a Memorandum of Cooperation on 12th December, 2015 on cooperation and assistance in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor project. This collaboration was based on the recommendation of the Empowered Committee for Innovative Collaborations led by Dr. Arvind Panagariya, NITI Aayog's Vice Chairman (VC) that recommended this project due to the low-cost funding, apart from a commitment for technology transfer and local manufacturing.

- **Government of India accepted the recommendation of adopting Shinkansen technology for the project.** In January, 2016, the PMO constituted a 'High Level Joint Committee on Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project' to be led by NITI Aayog VC to accelerate the execution of this project. The members of this committee include Railway Board Chairman, Foreign Secretary, Industrial Policy and Promotion Secretary and Economic Affairs Secretary. Till date 5 meetings of the JCM have been held.

- **The Joint Committee meetings have been able to give focussed directions to the important project at the highest level.** These have also been able to handle emerging difficulties and solve them to keep the pace of the project at a very high level.

Enhanced allocation for SCs and STs IN 2017-18:

- In view of merger of Plan and Non Plan expenditure in 2017-18, NITI has ensured adequate allocation for SCs (SCSP) and STs (TSP). "Allocation for the welfare of SCs" has increased from Rs. 38833 crore (BE) in 2016-17 to Rs. 52393 crore (BE) in 2017-18 i.e. an increase of 35%.

- **Similarly, the total allocation for the welfare of STs has increased from Rs. 24005 (BE) crore in 2016-17 to Rs. 31920 crore (BE)** 2017-18 i.e. an increase of 33%. NITI Aayog has also developed Framework for Monitoring of schemes relating to SCs and STs by the nodal Ministries.

NGO-Darpan Portal:

- NITI has developed the NGO portal Darpan that is being used by 35 departments and 27214 NGOs.

- **To ensure that there is no disbursement of grants to NGOs without Unique ID from portal, PAN of NGO and PAN** and Aadhar number of office bearers has been made mandatory for NGO registration. The portal is tracking funds to ensure transparency. NITI Aayog is currently formulating guidelines for Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)/Central Sector (CS) Schemes through NGOs.

Holistic Development of Islands

- a. The Government of India has decided to develop identified islands for maritime trade, shipping, fisheries, eco-tourism, under-sea mining, oil and gas and other socio-economic activities. It is also planned to replace use of diesel with promotion of non-conventional energy sources such as Solar Energy, Wind Energy, Tidal Energy, Ocean Thermal Energy etc. in the islands.

- b. **NITI Aayog has been mandated to steer the process of holistic development of the identified islands** as unique models of sustainable development and prepare a comprehensive development plan for each island with a focus on sustainability. NITI Aayog, in consultation with concerned Central Ministries / Departments, UT Administration and other stakeholders has short-listed 10 islands for holistic development in the first phase viz. Smith, Ross, Long, Avis, and Little Andaman in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Minicoy, Bangaram, Tinnakara, Cheriyam and Suheli in Lakshadweep. Request for Qualification cum Request for Proposal (RFQ-cum-RFP) for selection of consultants for 'Preparation of Concept Development Plans and Detailed Master Plans for Holistic Development of identified 10 Islands' has been issued and process for selection of consultant is underway.

Energy, Climate Change and Overseas Engagements

- 1) In 2014, the erstwhile Planning Commission had developed the Government of India's first dynamic and interactive web based scenario building tool for the Indian energy sector, India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS), 2047. Keeping in mind the rapidly changing energy landscape of India, NITI Aayog developed a revamped version of the IESS, 2047, factoring in newer outputs, new technologies, and sectors that are gaining importance in the present scenario. To keep the tool relevant in the present policy space, the IESS V2.0 also builds in the recent development goals of the Government of India. The IESS team conducted nationwide outreach workshops to increase the usability of this tool in tier II cities, educational institutions etc.

- 2) **NITI Aayog prepared a "Report on India's Renewable Electricity Roadmap 2030"** which summarizes the opportunities and barriers to renewable Energy and the rationale as well as the benefits and costs of its adoption within the context of the Indian Power System. This was done by a comprehensive stakeholder-driven "roadmap" exercise. The report was launched in February, 2015 during RE-Invest-2015.

- 3) **The draft National Energy Policy (NEP). Has been finalised and submitted for Cabinet approval.**

- 4) **An initiative has been taken up on improved Energy Data Management under Sustainable Growth Working Group** of the India-US Energy Dialogue and also on GIS mapping. The above endeavour will coordinate all the sources of energy and present the data in a consolidated manner.

- 5) **Launch of report of the Expert Group on 175 GW of Renewable Energy (RE) by 2022 in December, 2016.** The Expert Group advised that all non-financial support options and coordinated implementation ecosystem should be made available to RE.

- 6) **Launch of India Energy Portal** - NITI Aayog has launched the India Energy Portal (IEP) (www.indiaenergy.gov.in) which presently houses its flagship initiative India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047, with new added features and content. An offering of the Energy Division of NITI Aayog, the Portal is intended to provide a common platform for all energy related data and research from different sources across the country. The portal aims to reach not only policy makers, but to a wider audience who want to get an overview of India's energy scenario.

- 7) **NITI Aayog organized a meeting on** "India Power Sector: Supporting a Low Carbon Transition" with emphasis on best practices adopted worldwide on flexible generation and storage solutions for RE integration with International Energy Agency and other stakeholders on March 9, 2017 at NITI Aayog, New Delhi. Nine States, energy ministries/PSUs and knowledge partners participated in the workshop.

- 8) **GIS based Energy Map of India** – In order to prepare a consolidated energy data map of India, NITI Aayog has entrusted the responsibility of formulation of GIS Energy Map of India to Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). The consolidated energy map would provide requisite energy related information to all stakeholders which would help in better decision making.

- **9) The Energy Division** also supports the International Cooperation activities. It hosted a number of workshops/Conferences both on issues of domestic and international import:

- **a) 4th India-China Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED)** was hosted by India under the co-chair of NITI Aayog and National Development & Reform Commission, People's Republic of China on October 6-7th, 2016,

- **b) Energy Data Management meetings** of US DOE-Energy Information Administration (EIA) with Indian Energy Ministries and Departments held on October 24-27th, 2016 in New Delhi.

- **c) 2nd NITI Aayog-** Development Research Centre (DRC) Dialogue, People's Republic of China held on November 16-17th, 2016 held at New Delhi.

- **d) A workshop was organised on Effective and efficient realization of the extensive bioenergy resources** of India on March 7th, 2017 with a view to prepare consultation paper on national bio energy policy.

- **e) Workshop on Energy Data Portal** developed by Prayas on February 17, 2017 at NITI Aayog.

- **f) NITI Aayog** has partnered with DBEIS, Government of UK for Development of State Level Energy Calculator. A kick off meeting held on 14thMarch, 2017 to start the exercise for three states Tamilnadu, Gujarat and Assam, with the launch of these three Projects.

Port Ecosystem Efficiency:

- CEO, NITI Aayog chaired two meeting on the theme of Port ecosystem on 09th August, 2016 and 30th January, 2017 respectively on various parameters of Port ecosystem with various stakeholders including Ministry of shipping, Department of Custom and Central excise, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Railways and Industry players.

- **In the first meeting, aggressive targets were set for various parameters such as target time for export and import**, import customs, railways and CSF. Very notable achievements were reported in timings of cutting down delays in customs processing, loading of railway rakes in JNPT and documentation. In the meeting on 30.1.2017, target times for port ecosystem efficiency parameters for 2017-18 have been set.

Transformative Mobility Workshop and Report

- NITI Aayog in collaboration with Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), USA held a high level working session on transformative mobility solutions on 27-28th February, 2017 at New Delhi. This high-level meeting brought together a diverse group of mobility experts from government, industry, and civil society to identify and explore emerging technologies and business models that could allow India to "leapfrog" traditional approaches to passenger mobility.

- **A report based on this meeting was released on 12th May 2017 which establishes a vision for the future of India's mobility system**, outlines a set of actionable solutions to realize the vision, and estimates the impact of such a transformation. The report has found that this "leapfrog" opportunity may allow India to save as much as 1 gigaton of carbon emissions between 2017 and 2030 and approximately $60 billion in annual diesel and petrol costs in 2030.

- **These savings are made possible by better urban design**, high-utilization business models, accelerated adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), and additional levers. Pursuing this path for mobility development could enhance energy security, reduce air pollution and carbon emissions, and bolster India's job creation, domestic innovation, and industrial competitiveness.

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Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution

- FOOD SECURITY FOR POOR · National Food Security Act, NFSA extended all over the country. · 80.72 crore (as on 27.03.2018) persons covered now get coarse grains at Rs. 1/kg, wheat at Rs. 2/ kg and rice at Rs. 3/ kg. · NFSA Act is being implemented in all the 36 States/UTs as against only in 11 states in May 2014.

- **PRICE MONITORING CELL (PMC) A) Price Stabilization Fund (PSF)** · Buffer stock of upto 20 lakh tonnes of pulses has been built through domestic procurement and import for effective market intervention to stabilize their prices · Procurement and import of Onions undertaken through NAFED, SFAC and MMTC for stabilizing prices. · Pulses from the buffer are being utilized for supply to States for distribution through their schemes.

- **B) Strengthening of Price Monitoring Cell (PMC)** · Grants released to States to strengthen the Price Monitoring Cell which facilitates price stabilization through appropriate policy recommendation and market intervention.

- **LEGAL METROLOGY** (1) Amendment in Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 to safeguard the interest of consumers and ease of doing business - (came into force from 1.1.2018): Ø Goods displayed by the seller on e-commerce platform shall contain declarations required under the Rules. § Specific mention is made in the rules that no person shall declare different MRPs on an identical pre-packaged commodity. § Bar Code/ QR Coding is allowed on voluntarily basis. § Provisions regarding declarations on Food Products have been harmonized with regulation under the Food Safety & Standards Act. § Medical devices which are declared as drugs, are brought into the purview of declarations to be made under the rules.

- **BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS (BIS) ACT 2016** A new Bureau of Indian standards (BIS) Act 2016 came into force from 12th October, 2017. The Act establishes the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) as the National Standards Body of India. The new Act has enabling provisions for the Government to bring under compulsory certification regime any goods or article of any scheduled industry, process, system or service which it considers necessary in the public interest or for the protection of human, animal or plant health, safety of the environment, or prevention of unfair trade practices, or national security.

- **CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL, 2018** The Government introduced new Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 in the Lok Sabha on 5.1.2018.The salient features of the bill include: Establishment of an executive agency to be known as the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect and enforce the rights of the consumers, provision for mediation, provision for product liability action, simplification of adjudication process in the Consumer Fora, Enabling the Central Government to make rules to regulate e-commerce and direct selling.

Supreme Court bats for minor rape survivors

- Context: In support of minor survivors of rape or sexual assault, the Supreme Court of India has issued a slew of guidelines.

- **Highlights:** Minor survivors of rape or sexual assault will get compensation on par with women victims. National Legal Services Authority's (NALSA) compensation scheme for women rape and sexual assault survivors shall be extended to minor children.

- **Special Judges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** should disburse compensation to minor victims of sex abuse as per the NALSA's 'Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes-2018'.

- **The NALSA compensation scheme:** The NALSA scheme provides a uniform payment of ☐ 5 lakh to a maximum ☐ 10 lakh for "loss of life" and to gang rape survivors in any part of the country. Similarly, in case of rape and unnatural sexual assault, the victim would get a minimum of ☐4 lakh and maximum of ☐ 7 lakh as compensation. Among other categories, if a victim suffers the loss of foetus, that is, by miscarriage as a result of assault or loss fertility, the NALSA scheme offers a compensation of ☐ 2 lakh to 3 lakh.

- **The scheme provides a victim of acid attacks**, in case of disfigurement of face, would get a minimum compensation of ☐ 7 lakh, while the upper limit would be ☐ 8 lakh. In acid attack cases, if the injury was more than 50%, a minimum compensation of ☐ 5 lakh would be given, while the maximum would be ☐ 8 lakh.

- **Way ahead:** The NALSA scheme would be made applicable to minor victims from October 2 until the Centre frames compensation guidelines under the POCSO.

- **About NALSA:** NALSA has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society. The aim is to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reasons of economic or other disabilities.

- **Important functions performed by NALSA:** NALSA organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes. NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes.

- **Services** provided by the agency include free legal aid in civil and criminal matters for the poor and marginalised people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer in any court or tribunal.

- **Free legal services** include provision of aid and advice to beneficiaries to access the benefits under the welfare statutes and schemes and to ensure access to justice in any other manner.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- Context: The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned the project "Development of Rural Circuit: Malanad Malabar Cruise Tourism Project' in Kerala under Swadesh Darshan Scheme for Rs. 80.37 Crores. The project focuses on development of water based thematic cruise experiences in and around Valapattanam and Kuppam Rivers of Kannur District.

- **The three thematic cruises developed under the project are as follows:** Malabari Cuisine and Culinary Cruise in Valapattanam River (Muthappan Cruise) – Cruise starts from Valapattanam to Munambu Kadavu in Valapattanam River with an effective Cruise Length of 40 km.

- **Valapattanam River**- Theyyam Cruise- Cruise starts from Valapattanam to Pazhayangadi in Valapattanam River with an effective length of 16 km. Mangrove Cruise in Kuppam River – Cruise starts from Pazhayangadi to Kuppam in Kuppam River with an effective Cruise length of 16 km.

- **Background:** Waterways have been an important mode of transport in Kerala from the time immemorial with its 44 Rivers and 7 Backwater regions. The total length of the navigation route in the Kerala is 1900 km. This is tune with the water based tourism which is getting prominence all over the world.

- **About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The Tourism Ministry had launched 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

- **Features of Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding. To leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.

- **Funding of individual project** will vary from state to state and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant). A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.

- **A Mission Directorate headed by the Member Secretary**, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders. PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

- Context: 3rd ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Conference on 'Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons' is being held in Seoul, Korea.

- **Aims and objectives of the conference:** The Conference will reaffirm the universal value of the human rights of older persons, share information on discrimination against the elderly and exemplary cases of long-term and palliative care in Asia and Europe, and also discuss operation and tasks of the ASEM Global Ageing Centre as an implementing institution for mutual cooperation among ASEM members for the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons.

- **ASEM: The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation bringing together the 28 European Union member states, 2 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.

- **The ASEM dialogue addresses political**, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between the two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. It was officially established on 1 March 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.

- **The ASEM Summit** is a biennial meeting between the Heads of State and Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

National Mission on GeM

- Context: The government has launched the National Mission on Government eMarketplace (GeM) for increasing awareness and accelerating the use of (GeM).

- **Highlights of the mission:** The National Mission will cover all central government departments, states and public sector undertakings in a mission mode. It is aimed at creating awareness about GeM, train the buyers and sellers, get them registered in GeM and increase the procurement through GeM. It also aims to promote inclusiveness by empowering various categories of sellers and service providers such as MSMEs, start-ups, domestic manufacturers, women entrepreneurs, and Self-Help Groups.

- **It will also Highlight and communicate the value addition** via transparency and efficiency in public procurement, including corruption-free governance in sync with the Central Government's objective of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'. The mission also aims to give a boost to cashless, contactless, paperless transactions in line with Digital India objectives.

- **About GeM:** It is an online marketplace to facilitate procurement of goods and services by various Ministries and agencies of the Government. The platform offers online, end to end solution for procurement of commonly used goods and services for all central government departments and state governments, public sector units and affiliated bodies. It aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement of goods and services and eliminate corruption.

- **Performance:** The e-marketplace completed two years in 2018 and on August 26, 2018, it crossed Rs 10,800 crore in terms of value and 6.96 lakh in terms of volume of transactions through the platform. The platform has more than 1.35 lakh sellers offering 4.43 lakh products and around 26,500 organisations as buyers.

Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats

- Context: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved continuation of the Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH) beyond the 12thPlan period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

- **About Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats:** The Scheme consists of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT), Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-DWH) and Project Elephant (CSS-PE). The implementation of the schemes would be done through the respective States in designated Tiger Reserves, Protected Areas and Elephant Reserves.

- **The activities covered under the scheme include the staff development** and capacity building, wildlife research and evaluation, anti-poaching activities, wildlife veterinary care, addressing man-animal conflicts and promoting eco-tourism. Financial assistance is also provided to States for relocation of communities from within protected areas to other areas.

- **The scheme has following three components:** Support to Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves). Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas. Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.

- **Significance and benefits of the scheme:** A total of 18 tiger range States, distributed in five landscapes of the country would be benefitted under the Project Tiger scheme. Similarly, for other two schemes, the coverage is entire country in case of Development of Wildlife Habitats (DWH) and 23 elephant range States for Project Elephant. It would foster wildlife conservation in general with specific inputs for tiger in Project Tiger area and elephant in Project Elephant area.

- **Besides immense environmental benefits and effective implementation of tiger** conservation inputs in and around tiger reserves under Project Tiger, wildlife conservation inputs in Protected Areas & nearby areas under Development of Wildlife Habitats and Elephant conservation inputs in Project Elephant areas, the schemes would result in overall strengthening/ consolidation of tiger, elephant and wildlife conservation in the country.

- **The schemes would address the human wildlife conflict effectively**. Besides, the communities opting for voluntary relocation from the Core/Critical Tiger Habitat (6900 families) would be benefitted under Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT) and 800 families under Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Development of Wildlife Habitat.

- **These schemes would generate employment opportunities** resulting in economic upliftment of people in and around tiger reserves/ Protected Areas besides leading to reduction in natural resource dependency with substitution by clean energy use. People living in vicinity would also get indirect benefits. Local populace would get opportunities to serve as guides, driver, hospitality personnel and in other ancillary jobs. These schemes would foster imparting various skills towards making people self-dependent through various eco-development projects, thereby enabling them to go for self-employment.

- **These schemes would result in resource generation** through tourist visits, thereby fostering in securing tiger source areas and other areas important for wildlife conservation, besides being helpful in sustaining life support systems as well as ensuring the food, water and livelihood security.

New Ganga clean-up law

- Context: With an aim to clean the river Ganga, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation has prepared a draft bill. The draft bill has provisions for several stringent measures.

- **Highlights of the Draft Bill:** Constitution of an armed Ganga Protection Corps (GPC): The draft seeks to constitute GPC whose personnel will have the authority to arrest those who pollute the river. The offenders may face a prison term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs 5 lakh. GPC will follow Code of Criminal Procedure. Its personnel will be provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs and will be deployed by National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority.

- **The draft bill lays down provision** for a National Ganga Council and a National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority to enforce the law and protect the river which flows over 2500 km. Among the cognizable offences, there are "Construction activities causing obstruction in the river; withdrawal of ground water for industrial or commercial consumption from the land fronting the river and its tributaries; commercial fishing or aqua culture in the river and its tributaries; discharging untreated or treated sewage into the river".

- **No person or municipal authority** will establish or take any steps to set up any industrial or residential or commercial premises or structure which may result in discharge of any sewage or trade effluent into the Ganga, otherwise he may face a five-year prison term or a fine of Rs 50,000 per day or both.

- **Background:** In July 2016, a committee was constituted under retired judge of the Allahabad High Court Justice Girdhar Malviya who had submitted a draft Bill last year named The National River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Bill, 2017. Subsequently, a four-member committee was set up by the Ministry to examine that and the Ministry has circulated a Cabinet note which includes a revised version of that draft Bill.

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Ministry of Communications & IT

- BHARAT NET: BHARAT NET PROJECT PHASE-1

  1. **· Over One lakh Gram Panchayats (GP)** across the country connected with high speed optical fibre network as per the declared deadline of 31 Dec 2017.

  2. **· Delivery of high-speed broadband services** in over 2.5 lakh villages benefitting more than 200 million rural Indians.

  3. **· As on 31st Dec 2017**, 2,54,895 km OFC has been laid covering 1,09,926 GPs out of which 1,01,370 GPs have been made Service Ready.

- **TELECOM SECTOR**

  1. **(i) Number of Telecom Connections** up from 898.02 million in 2012-13 to 1194.99 million in 2016-17, registering a growth of 33.07%.

2. **(ii) Total No. of Telecom Connections:** 1207.04 million. (September,2017), out of which 501.99 million connections were in the rural areas and 705.05 million were in the urban areas.

3. **(iii) Wireless telephony** now constitutes 98.04% of all subscriptions.

4. **(iv) Tele-density:** 93.42%. Rural areas: 56.78% & Urban areas: 172.86%.

5. **(v) Number of Internet Connections** went up to 431.21 million by the end of June'17.

6. **(vi) FDI equity inflow** in the telecom sector touched US $ 6.08 billion during April to September, 2017 which is more than four times that the sector witnessed during financial year 2015-16 and around 10% more than that during 2016-17.

- **Department of Posts - LEVERAGING POST OFFICES AS PASSPORT SEVA KENDRA:**

  1. **· 235 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK)** to be set up in two phases across the country to make available passport related services in all the states.

  2. **· First POPSK** at 25.1.2017 at Metagalli Post Office, Mysuru, Karnataka and Dahod Head Post Office, Gujarat.

  3. **· 59 POPSKs functioning** in camp mode and remaining 27 are various phase of readiness. Around 3.75 lakh passport appointments have been processed through these POPSKs.

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF CORE BANKING SOLUTIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS:**

  1. **· 23,424 out of a total of 25,353 (92%) Post Offices** are on the CORE Banking Services, CBS platform as on 11/10/2017.

  2. **· Post Office Savings Bank, POSB** is the largest entity in the country on the CBS platform surpassing all the banks. This feat was achieved in less than four years.

  3. **· 37.62 Crore accounts and 31.79 Crore savings certificates** are on the CBS platform for anywhere banking as of 11/10/2017.

Ministry of MSME

- ● Cabinet approves creation of 'Indian Enterprise Development Service (IEDS)' in the Office of Development Commissioner (MSME) under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

- ● **Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM)** launched and 3734738 till now

- ● **Foundation Stone** Laid for MSME Technology Centre at Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh under Technology Centre Systems Programme (TCSP) & National Vendor Development Programme

- ● **National SC/ST Hub launched in Ludhiana**

- ● **MSME Databank and Finance Facilitation** and Online Census of MSMEs and Finance Facilitation Centres Launched

- ● **Giant Charkha unveiled at IGI Airport**, Delhi. 42 carpenters from Ahmedabad built the Charkha in 55 days

- ● **Incubation cell at IIFT Delhi Launched**

- ● **Mauritius to exclusively offer Biofarming Technology to India**

- ● **National MSME Policy to be formulated for the First Time in India**

- ● **India concludes MoU on MSME Cooperation** with Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Member Countries. IORA Special Fund Created to Carry Out Activities Under this MoU

- ● **Cabinet approves MOU between India and United Arab Emirates** for cooperation in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises and Innovation

- ● **Micro and Small Enterprise Facilitation Council (MSEFC) Portal and MyMSME Mobile App Launched**

- ● **Financial Support to MSMEs** in ZED Certification Scheme launched.

- ● **MSME Delayed Payment Portal** – MSME Samadhaan Launched

- **Framework for Revival and Rehabilitation of MSMEs**

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- **The existing mechanism for addressing revival, rehabilitation** and exit of small enterprises is very weak in the country. The most recent Doing Business (DB) Report ranks India 137 out of the 189 economies for resolving insolvencies. It notes that resolving insolvency takes 4.3 years on average and costs 9.0% of the debtor's estate, with the most likely outcome being that the company will be sold as piecemeal sale.

- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)**

  1. **PMEGP is the flagship programme of the government** offering credit linked subsidy to establish new enterprises for generating continuous and sustainable employment opportunities in Rural and Urban areas of the country.

  2. **Ø Rs. 860.51 crore has been released by the Ministry** as margin money under PMEGP out of which Rs. 528.32 crore has already been disbursed by the banks.

  3. **Ø 24126 new enterprises providing employment** to 170983 persons have been benefited under the Scheme.

  4. **Ø There is more than 50% increase** over the previous year in terms of funds disbursed by the banks, no of projects with funds disbursed and the employment generated.

- **A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)**

  1. **ASPIRE has been launched on 16.03.2015 with an objective** to set up a network of technology centers, incubation centres to accelerate entrepreneurship and also to promote start-ups for innovation and entrepreneurship in rural and agriculture based industry with a fund of Rs.210 crores.

  2. **Ø The planned outcomes of ASPIRE** are setting up Technology Business Incubators (TBI), Livelihood Business Incubators (LBI) and creation of a Fund of Funds for such initiatives with SIDBI.

  3. **Ø 1st LBI set up in April-2015 under ASPIRE** within a month of launching the Scheme. The first batch of 107 youth has been trained and skilled through it.

  4. **Ø 19 LBIs** have been approved till September 2015 and another 9 LBIs & 2 TBI is ready to be approved.

- **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)**

1. **The objectives SFURTI is to organize the traditional industries** and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long term sustainability by way of enhancing the marketability of products, improving the skills of artisans, making provision for common facilities and strengthening the cluster governance systems.

2. **Ø The Scheme guidelines of SFURTI** have been revamped in 2015 and the Scheme has taken giant strides in 2015. Funds to the tune of Rs.62 Crore have been sanctioned under the Scheme in 2015 as against Nil in 2014.

3. **Ø 68 clusters have already been approved in 2015** itself against the target of 71 clusters during 12th Plan period with more than a year of the plan period to spare.

- **Lean Manufacturing Competitiveness Scheme (LMCS)**

    1. **LMCS is being implemented across the country** to enhance the competitiveness of manufacturing MSMEs. The Objective of the Scheme is to enhance the manufacturing competitiveness of MSMEs through application of various Lean Manufacturing Techniques (e.g. Total Productive Maintenance (TPM), 5S, Visual control, Standard Operation Procedures, Single Minutes Exchange of Dies or Quick Changeover (SMED), Value Stream Mapping, Just in Time, Kanban System, Kaizen, Cellular Layout, Poka Yoke).

    2. **Ø 188 New Clusters identified** and selected for LM (Lean manufacturing) interventions.

    3. **Ø Lean manufacturing Interventions** have been initiated in 359 Units.

    4. **Ø Organised 63 Awareness Programmes** across the country.

- **Credit Guarantee Trust Fust for Micro and CGTMSE Scheme**

    1. **CGTMSE was set up to strengthen credit delivery system** and facilitate flow of credit to the MSE sector. The Credit Guarantee under CGTMSE seeks to reassure the lender that, in the event of a MSE unit, which availed collateral free credit facilities, fails to discharge its liabilities to the lender; the CGMSE would make good the loss incurred by the lender up to 85 per cent of the credit facility.

    2. **Ø During the current financial year** (April to October 2015), total number of proposals approved under the scheme was 2,31,774 involving a guarantee amount of Rs.11,446 crore.

- **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) for Technology Upgradation**

1. **CLCSS aims at facilitating technology** upgradation of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) by providing 15% capital subsidy (limited to maximum Rs.15 lakhs) for purchase of Plant & Machinery. Maximum limit of eligible loan for calculation of subsidy under the scheme is Rs.100 lakhs. Presently, more than 1500 well established/improved technologies under 51 sub-sectors have been approved under the Scheme.

2. **Ø During the current financial year** (April to October 2015), 1,195 units benefitted and total subsidy released to the tune of Rs. 75.57 crore.

Trust status for Bharat Ke Veer

- Context: The government has granted the status of a trust to 'Bharat Ke Veer', a private initiative which aids families of paramilitary personnel killed in action. Akshay Kumar and former national badminton champion Pullela Gopichand have been included as trustees.

- **Support by the government:** The initiative has now been formalized into a registered trust for providing a platform for all citizens to contribute and provide assistance to the families of martyred personnel. The public can visit the 'Bharat Ke Veer' application and website, and contribute to support the families of jawans who die in the line of duty. Contributions to Bharat Ke Veer have been exempted from Income Tax.

- **About Bharat ke Veer:** What is it? It is a fund-raising initiative by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India on behalf of members of the Indian Armed Forces. It aims to enable willing donors to contribute towards the family of a braveheart who sacrificed his/her life in line of duty. This website is technically supported by National Informatics Centre (NIC) and powered by State Bank of India.

- **How it works?** It allows anyone to financially support the bravehearts of his choice or towards the "Bharat Ke Veer" corpus. The amount so donated will be credited to the account of 'Next of Kin' of those Central Armed Police Force/Central Para Military Force soldiers. To ensure maximum coverage, a cap of 15 lakh rupees is imposed and the donors would be alerted if the amount exceeds, so that they can choose to divert part of the donation to another braveheart account or to the "Bharat Ke Veer" corpus.

- **Who will manage the fund? "Bharat Ke Veer"** corpus would be managed by a committee made up of eminent persons of repute and senior Government officials, who would decide to disburse the fund equitably to the braveheart's family on need basis.

Chabahar Port

- Context: Iran will handover the strategic Chabahar port to an Indian company within a month for operation as per an interim pact.

- **Under the agreement signed between India and Iran earlier**, India is to equip and operate two berths in Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of $85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of $22.95 million on a 10-year lease.

- **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 and India can bypass Pakistan with the Chabahar port becoming functional.

- **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 is 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.

MOVE, the first global mobility summit

- Context: NITI Aayog, in collaboration with various ministries and industry partners, is organising 'MOVE: Global Mobility Summit' in New Delhi. It was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India.

- **Aim of the Summit:** The summit aims to bring together stakeholders from across the sectors of mobility and transportation to co-create a public interest framework to revolutionize transport. The summit also aims to set the base for a transport system which is safe, clean, shared and connected, affordable, accessible and inclusive.

- **The summit will deliberate on five themes:** Maximising asset utilisation and services. Comprehensive electrification and alternative fuels. Reinventing public transport. Goods transport and logistics. Data analytics and mobility.

- **Key features of the Summit:** The summit will feature global political leaders from mobility space and will see the participation of over 2200 participants from across the world including government leadership, research organizations, academia, industry leaders, think tanks and civil society organisations.

- **The conclave will see over 30 global CEOs**, 100 state officials, and foreign delegates and 200 Indian CEOs participating in the event. International representation from embassies and the private sector will include the US, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, New Zealand, Austria, Germany, and Brazil.

- **Why Mobility?** Mobility is what keeps the engine of life running. Whether it is personal mobility for work or leisure or mobility of goods across value chains, without the ability to traverse large distances in short time spans, civilization would not be where it is today. In an urbanizing world, mobility is integral to city design, facilitating the evolution of physical space for liveability. Ranging from pedestrian and personal transport to public transit and freight movement, mobility is a crucial piece of the development puzzle and the key to unlocking the potential of India's economy and people.

- **Across sectors, public and private expenditure** is being invested in effective and efficient transport. The challenge lies in ensuring that these systems meet the needs of their users in a sustainable manner. It must be clean for environmental benefits, shared to maximize asset efficiency, and connected to meet user needs from end-to-end. Affordability of public transit is key for low-income users, and of freight for industry. Accessibility and inclusivity is crucial for remote and differently-abled users across geographies, with the philosophy of leaving no-one behind. Safe, energy-efficient and low-emission systems are necessary for India to meet its international commitments on climate change.

- **Way ahead:** As mobility is what keeps the engine of life running, it is a key to unlock the potential of India's economy and people. Affordability of public transit is crucial for low-income users and of freight for the industry. Accessibility and inclusivity are crucial for remote and differently-abled users across geographies, with the philosophy of leaving no-one behind. Safe, energy-efficient and low-emission systems are necessary for India to meet its international commitments on climate change.

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

- Context: UN chief Antonio Guterres recently reiterated his appeal to eight nations, including India and the US, to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, saying the failure to bring it into force undermines global efforts to ensure a world free of atomic weapons.

- **Background:** Although more than 180 countries have signed the CTBT, and mostly ratified it, the treaty can only enter into force after it is ratified by eight countries with nuclear technology capacity, namely China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.

- **What is CTBT?** The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the Treaty banning all nuclear explosions – everywhere, by everyone. The Treaty was negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It opened for signature on 24 September 1996.

- **Why is the CTBT so important?** The CTBT is the last barrier on the way to develop nuclear weapons. It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons and the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs. When the Treaty enters into force it provides a legally binding norm against nuclear testing. The Treaty also helps prevent human suffering and environmental damages caused by nuclear testing.

- **India and the CTBT:** Since its inception, India has had a number of reservations about the CTBT. While it has stood by its demand for a nuclear weapons-free world, various principled, procedural, political, and security concerns have stood in the way of its support for the CTBT.

- **India's principled opposition drew** from its emphasis on universal and complete nuclear disarmament in a time-bound manner. India has traditionally believed this to be the end goal with the test ban just being a path to get there. But it did not insist on a complete disarmament clause in 1994, acknowledging that it was a "complex issue."

- **Another major concern was Article XIV, the entry-into-force (EIF) clause**, which India considered a violation of its right to voluntarily withhold participation in an international treaty. The treaty initially made ratification by states that were to be a part of the the CTBT's International Monitoring System (IMS) mandatory for the treaty's EIF.

- **Need of the hour:** CTBT has an essential role within the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. More than 20 years since its negotiation, the Treaty has yet to enter into force. Every effort must be made to bring about the immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, CTBT. The failure to bring the treaty into force prevents its full implementation and undermines its permanence in the international security architecture.

NASA's Cassini spacecraft

- Context: Using data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft, scientists have spotted a surprising feature emerging at Saturn's northern pole as it nears summertime – a warming, high-altitude jet stream with a hexagonal shape.

- **Key facts:** The vortex is akin to the famous hexagon seen deeper down in Saturn's clouds. The edges of this newly-found vortex appear to be hexagonal, precisely matching a famous and bizarre hexagonal cloud pattern we see deeper down in Saturn's atmosphere.

- **The results suggest that the lower-altitude** hexagon may influence what happens above, and that it could be a towering structure hundreds of miles in height. This warm vortex sits hundreds of miles above the clouds, in the stratosphere.

- **About Cassini Mission:** Launched in 1997, the Cassini mission — a cooperation between NASA, the European Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency — has sent back thousands of stunning images and made numerous discoveries about the ringed planet and its moons.

- **Cassini–Huygens** is an unmanned spacecraft sent to the planet Saturn. Cassini is the fourth space probe to visit Saturn and the first to enter orbit. Its design includes a Saturn orbiter and a lander for the moon Titan. The lander, called Huygens, landed on Titan in 2005. The spacecraft was launched on October 15, 1997. This was the first landing ever accomplished in the outer Solar System.

- **Objectives of the mission:** Determine the three-dimensional structure and dynamic behavior of the rings of Saturn. Determine the composition of the satellite surfaces and the geological history of each object.

- **Determine the nature** and origin of the dark material on Iapetus's leading hemisphere. Measure the three-dimensional structure and dynamic behavior of the magnetosphere.

- **Study the dynamic behavior** of Saturn's atmosphere at cloud level. Study the time variability of Titan's clouds and hazes. Characterize Titan's surface on a regional scale.

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

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- Ø **Rs. 860.51 crore has been released by the Ministry** as margin money under PMEGP out of which Rs. 528.32 crore has already been disbursed by the banks.

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Ministry of MSME

- ● Cabinet approves creation of 'Indian Enterprise Development Service (IEDS)' in the Office of Development Commissioner (MSME) under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

- ● **Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM)** launched and 3734738 till now

- ● **Foundation Stone Laid for MSME Technology** Centre at Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh under Technology Centre Systems Programme (TCSP) & National Vendor Development Programme

- ● **National SC/ST** Hub launched in Ludhiana

- ● **MSME Databank and Finance Facilitation and Online Census** of MSMEs and Finance Facilitation Centres Launched

- ● **Giant Charkha unveiled at IGI Airport**, Delhi. 42 carpenters from Ahmedabad built the Charkha in 55 days

- ● **Incubation cell at IIFT Delhi** Launched

- ● **Mauritius to exclusively offer Biofarming Technology to India**

- ● **National MSME Policy** to be formulated for the First Time in India

- ● **India concludes MoU on MSME Cooperation** with Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Member Countries. IORA Special Fund Created to Carry Out Activities Under this MoU

- ● **Cabinet approves MOU between India** and United Arab Emirates for cooperation in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises and Innovation

- ● **Micro and Small Enterprise Facilitation Council** (MSEFC) Portal and MyMSME Mobile App Launched

- ● **Financial Support to MSMEs in ZED** Certification Scheme launched.

- ● **MSME Delayed Payment Portal** – MSME Samadhaan Launched

Framework for Revival and Rehabilitation of MSMEs

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- **The most recent Doing Business (DB)** Report ranks India 137 out of the 189 economies for resolving insolvencies.

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Kepler space telescope

- Context: NASA's planet hunting Kepler space telescope — which has led to the discovery of over 2,300 planets so far – has woken up from sleep mode and has restarted its scientific operations. NASA has been closely monitoring the probe since it is expected to run out of fuel soon.

- **The Kepler team** is planning to collect as much science data as possible in its remaining time and beam it back to Earth before the loss of the fuel-powered thrusters that would make it difficult to aim the spacecraft for data transfer.

- **Background:** The space telescope, originally launched in March 2009, has had a tumultuous year. The team placed Kepler into hibernation in July, as their new planet-hunter, the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), began testing for its own mission. The hibernation-like state was to ensure that the data from Kepler's 18th mission, stored onboard the spacecraft, would be able to make its way back to Earth.

- **Accomplishments:** In total, the Kepler mission has confirmed the existence of 2,652 exoplanets and 30 of those exist within the Small Habitable Zone, the area of space surrounding a star where a planet could theoretically support a surface of liquid water (and potentially extraterrestrial life).

- **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. Its closest point to Earth (67,000 miles or 108,000 kilometers) is about triple the distance of geosynchronous orbit, where most communications satellites operate.

- **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.

Eight Avian Species Declared "Extinct" in New Study

- Scientists have declared eight species of birds to be extinct in what are being seen as the first avian extinctions of the 21st century. The study was conducted by non-profit "BirdLife International". It assessed 51 species judged "critically endangered" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) "Red List" by using a new statistical method.

- **Key facts:** The species gone extinct include Spix's macaw, the Alagoas foliage-gleaner, the cryptic treehunter, the Pernambuco pygmy-owl, the poo-uli, or black-faced honeycreeper and the glaucous macaw. Five of these new extinctions have occurred in South America and have been attributed by scientists to deforestation. Four out of the eight species declared extinct belong to Brazil.

- **About Birdlife International:** BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation) is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.

- **BirdLife International** publishes a quarterly magazine, World Birdwatch, which contains recent news and authoritative articles about birds, their habitats, and their conservation around the world. BirdLife International is the official Red List authority for birds, for the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

- **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs):** The IBAs are "places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity" and are "distinct areas amenable to practical conservation action," according to BirdLife International.

- **Declaring a site** as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area does not ensure that the site gets legal protection or becomes inaccessible to people. Instead BirdLife International encourages national and State governments to recognise the areas as sites of vital importance for conservation of wildlife and to empower local community-based conservation initiatives.

Bonnethead shark:

- **Key facts:** 60% of its diet consists of seagrass. The species graze upon seagrass, in addition to eating bony fish, crabs, snails and shrimp. The bonnethead shark is abundant in the shallow waters of the Western Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico.

- **Though small by shark standards**, adult females — the larger of the sexes —can still reach an impressive five feet long.

- **Lacking the kind of teeth** best suited for mastication, the shark may rely on strong stomach acids to weaken the plants' cells so the enzymes can have their digestive effects

Atal Pension Yojana

- **New changes:** To further incentivize people's participation in the scheme, age criterion for participation has been revised. Earlier, people of age 18 to 60 years were entitled to enroll in this scheme. But now it has been relaxed further to 65 years, taking into consideration rise in average age-expectancy,

- **Also, now the scheme will expand its focus to target individuals**, instead of households. Besides, all accounts opened after August 2018 will have accident insurance limit of Rs 2 lakh, double than earlier Rs 1 lakh limit. The overdraft facility of the scheme has also been increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000.

- **Atal Pension Yojna (APY):** Under the APY, subscribers would receive a fixed minimum pension of Rs. 1000 per month, Rs. 2000 per month, Rs. 3000 per month, Rs. 4000 per month, Rs. 5000 per month, at the age of 60 years, depending on their contributions, which itself would vary on the age of joining the APY.

- **The Central Government** would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber account, for a period of 5 years, that is, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, to those who join the NPS before 31st December, 2015 and who are not members of any statutory social security scheme and who are not Income Tax payers.

- **The minimum age of joining APY** is 18 years and maximum age is 40 years. The benefit of fixed minimum pension would be guaranteed by the Government.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

- **Background:** India had taken part in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 and bagged the 72nd rank among 74 participating countries. Then UPA government had boycotted PISA, blaming "out of context" questions for India's dismal performance.

- **About the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA):** The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy every three years.

- **First conducted in 2000**, the major domain of study rotates between reading, mathematics, and science in each cycle. PISA also includes measures of general or cross-curricular competencies, such as collaborative problem solving. By design, PISA emphasizes functional skills that students have acquired as they near the end of compulsory schooling.

- **PISA is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation** and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization of industrialized countries, and is conducted in the United States by NCES. Data collection for the most recent assessment was completed in Fall 2015.

- **In 2012 PISA test**, schools of Shanghai in China topped reading, mathematics and science test, followed closely by Singapore. In 2015, Singapore, Japan and Estonia were ranked as top three countries, in that order.

- **PISA 2021:** PISA 2021 test is likely to be administered in schools in Union Territory of Chandigarh. Apart from schools in Chandigarh, HRD Ministry also suggested that all Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs), funded and run by Centre, shall take the test.

- **Why Chandigarh?** Chandigarh was selected for its compact area, students are taught in Hindi and English (Government wants to keep number of languages in which test has to be administered to minimum). Chandigarh has record of performing well in learning assessments.

What is COMCASA?

- COMCASA stands for Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement and is one of the four foundational agreements that the U.S. signs with allies and close partners to facilitate interoperability between militaries and sale of high end technology.

- **COMCASA is an India-specific version of the Communication and Information** on Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). It comes into force immediately, and is valid for a period 10 years.

- **COMCASA allows India** to procure transfer specialised equipment for encrypted communications for US origin military platforms like the C-17, C-130 and P-8Is. Currently, these platforms use commercially available communication systems.

- **COMCASA is a "technology enabler"** to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication and electronic systems to India as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems from leaking to other countries like Russia. This agreement would allow the interoperability of India and United States equipments.

- **Benefits of this agreement:** The Comcasa provides the legal framework for the US to part with its sensitive communication equipment and codes to enable transfer of realtime operational information. This equipment is largely used for ground-to-air communication, on installed US-origin military aircraft, to enable best battle situation awareness.

- **The US data link is considered the most secure communication platform**, which will also allow India access to big data base of American intelligence, including real-time imagery.

- **The Comcasa will allow both sides to operate on the same communication systems**, enabling an "interoperable" environment for militaries. Without this agreement, the US cannot part with highly coded communication equipment with the military platforms they sell to India. India has to depend on commercially available less secure systems on, otherwise, high-end platforms like C-130Js and the P8I maritime surveillance aircraft, among others. COMCASA will change that. Now the US government will be able to give the go-ahead to install the best communication equipment on relevant platforms such as aircraft being sold to India.

- **COMCASA will effectively mean India** sharing the real-time American intelligence on military deployments by China and Pakistan. COMCASA will also help India obtain the armed version of the Sea Guardian drones. The US could not part with the weapon systems on the drone without COMCASA which will now allow installation of data and communication systems.

- **What next?** India had signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016. The last one remaining is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

- Context: The Union Government has decided to make the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) an open-ended scheme and added more incentives to encourage people to open bank accounts.

- **Under the new incentives:** The overdraft limit for account holders has now been doubled to Rs 10000. The free accident insurance cover for those opening Jan Dhan accounts after August 28 too has been doubled to Rs 2 lakh.

- **There will be no conditions** attached for over-draft of up to Rs 2,000. The upper age limit for availing the facility has also been hiked to 65 from the earlier 60 years.

- **About PMJDY: The primary aim of this scheme is to provide poor people access to bank accounts.** The scheme covers both urban and rural areas of India. All bank accounts will be linked to a debit card which would be issued under the Ru-Pay scheme. Rupay is India's own unique domestic card network owned by National Payments Corporation of India and has been created as an alternative to Visa and Mastercard.

- **Under the first phase of this scheme**, every individual who opens a bank account becomes eligible to receive an accident insurance cover of up-to Rs 1 Lakh for his entire family.

- **Life Insurance coverage** is also available under PMJDY. Only one person in the family will be covered and in case of the person having multiple cards/accounts, the benefit will be allowed only under one card i.e. one person per family will get a single cover of Rs 30,000.

- **The scheme also provides incentives** to business and banking correspondents who serve as link for the last mile between savings account holders and the bank by fixing a minimum monthly remuneration of Rs 5000.

Kendriya Hindi Samiti:

- Context: 31st meeting of the Central Hindi Committee was recently held in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

- **About Kendriya Hindi Samiti:** The Kendriya Hindi Samiti was constituted in the year 1967. Chaired by PM, it is the apex policy making body which lays the guidelines for the propagation and progressive use of Hindi as official language of the union.

- **SLINEX-2018:** Context: India, Sri Lanka joint naval exercise SLINEX-2018 was recently held at Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. About: SLINEX exercise started in 2005 was previously held once in two years and now it has been converted to annual event this year onwards.

- **SLINEX exercise is continuation of ongoing operational interaction** between both navies wherein regular ships visits are being undertaken between the two countries. SLINEX 2017 was held at Visakhapatnam in September 2017 wherein two ships SLNS participated from Sri Lanka Navy.

Neem Coated Urea

- **Government makes Neem coating of Urea mandatory-25.5.2015.** 100 % of Neem Coating of Indigenous Urea and Imported Urea achieved w.e.f. 1st September, 2015 and 1st December, 2015 respectively Improvement in soil health.

- **Reduction in costs with respect to plant protection chemicals.** Reduction in pest and disease attack. Diversion of highly subsidized urea towards non-agricultural purposes reduced to negligible.

- **Assured availability of Urea.** Increased Nitrogen Use Efficiency)NUE(by 5 to 10% During the last three years i.e. 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, the consumption (Kg/hectare) showing a declining trend - 152.53, 149.61 and 136.44 (estimated) respectively.

- **This may be due to neem coating of Urea which increases efficacy due to slow release of Nitrogen.** Increase of crop yield is as under (as per Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) Study:

- · **An increase in yield of paddy to an extent of 5.79 per cent** · An increase in yield of sugarcane to extent of 17.5 per cent · An increase in yield of maize to the extent of 7.14 per cent · An increase in yield of Soya bean to the extent of 7.4 per cent · An increase in yield Tur/ Red Gram to the extent of 16.88 per cent.

Record Production of Urea

- **Highest ever production of 244.75 LMT** of indigenous Urea during 2015-16, almost maintained in 2016-17.

- **Highest ever additional production** of 20 LMT of Urea during 2015-16 without adding additional urea production capacity and at no extra cost. Special Banking Arrangement of Rs. 10,000 crores approved in Budget 2017-18 to clear fertilizer subsidy dues during 2016-17

- **Introduction of 45 Kg.** Urea Bags replacing the existing 50 Kg. Bags Vide Notification dated 4.9.2017, it has been decided by the Govt., to introduce 45 Kg Bag of urea replacing the existing 50 Kg bag.

New Urea policy 2015

- **Effective from 1st June, 2015 to 31st March, 2019.** Production of urea during the year 2016-17 was 242.01 LMT, significantly higher than the production of urea during 2012-13 (225.75LMT) and 2013-14(227.15 LMT)

- **Production of extra 20 Lakh/MT Urea per year** Promoting energy efficiency in Urea production, maximizing indigenous Urea production and rationalizing the subsidy.

- **Helping domestic urea sector to become globally competitive** Availability of abundant Urea; no queues – last three years, availability greater than requirement Import substitution and saving of foreign exchange reserves

Reduction in the rates of P&K Fertilizers

- · **The Department had encouraged the Fertilizer** companies to reduce the rates of P&K fertilizers which resulted in reduction in the MRP of DAP, MOP and Complex fertilizers by Rs. 125/, Rs.250/- and Rs. 50/- respectively per 50 kg bag from June 2016.

- · **The prices of DAP again reduced by Rs. 65/- per 50 kg during December, 2016.**

New Investment Policy (NIP) – 2012

- · **Based on NIP – 2012 (amendment on 7th October 2014),** any interested company can establish urea plants in the country.

- **Matix Fertilisers & Chemicals Limited** (Matix) has set up a Coal Bed Methane (CBM) based Greenfield Ammonia-Urea complex at Panagarh, West Bengal with the installed capacity of 1.3 MMT per annum. The commercial production of Matix has started on 1st October, 2017.

- · **Chambal Fertilizers & Chemicals Limited (CFCL)** has also proposed to set up a brownfield project with capacity of 1.34 MMT at Gadepan, Rajasthan, which is likely to start commercial production in January, 2019.

Revival of defunct Fertilizer Units

- **Rs. 50,000 crores to be invested to revive Defunct Fertilizer** Units in Gorakhpur, Sindri, Talcher, Ramagundam and Barauni (New Urea units of 12.7 lakh MT at each location) and build the supporting PM 'URJA GANGA' (Jagdishpur - Haldia & Bokaro - Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline) and the 50 LMT Dhamra LNG terminal to ensure gas supply to the revived plants.

- **In addition, Government has also decided to set up a new urea plant at the location of the existing urea unit of M/s Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer** Corporation Limited at Namrup with a capacity of 8.4 LMT per annum. In view of these developments, the present production of about 25 million MT is expected to increase to 28 million MT in the year 2019-20 and to about 34 million MT in the year 2021-22.

- **RAMAGUNDAM PROJECT is likely to be commissioned by 31.12.2018.** SINDRI & GORAKHPUR UNITS OF FCIL AND BARAUNI UNIT OF HFCL likely tobe operational by October 2020 . TALCHER PROJECT likely to start production by 2021. Model Fertilizer Retails Shops across the country

- · **2000 Model Fertilizer Retail Shops** to be opened in next 3 years from 2016-19 for abundant availability of Urea · 2044 model fertilizer retail shops made operational till 19th March 2018

City Compost Scheme

- **Notified by the Department of Fertilizers** on 10.2.2016, in which Marketing Development Assistance)MDA(of Rs.1500/MT provided for scaling up production and consumption of city compost.

- · **During the year 2017-18** (upto Jan., 2018), 1,01,718.37 MT of City Compost has been co-marketed by fertilizer marketing companies.

Direct Benefit Transfer in Fertilizer Subsidy

- · **All States/UTs have been brought** under the framework of DBT in Fertilizers from 1st March 2018. Implementation of the DBT Scheme requires deployment of PoS devices at every retailer shop, training of retailers & wholesalers for operating PoS device.

- · **Across the country, Lead Fertilizer Supplier (LFS)** has conducted 4630 training sessions, as a part of ongoing PoS deployment and as a precursor to nation-wide rollout of DBT. Approximately 1.8 lakh retailers were sensitized during the introductory training sessions conducted by LFS and 89% of PoS devices have been deployed across the country.

- **Savings in subsidy as per the following information** received from the pilot district of Krishna, Andhra Pradesh: · Despite increase of 15,576 Ha (Net Sown Area) in 2016-17 as compared to 2015-16, Consumption of fertilizers was reduced by 25,931 MTs resulting in saving of subsidy of Rs.44.83 Crores)

- · **Reduction in Per Capita consumption** of Fertilizers (Farmer can save Rs.1750 on fertilizers/acre i.e, 41% of farmer investment saved due to balanced use of fertilizer)

- · **Retailers and farmers in all districts** reported "nil shortage" of urea in last 2 years owing to neem coating. · Overcharging reduced post introduction of Point of Sale (PoS) machines · Increased tracking and reduced diversion of Subsidized Fertilizers

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)

- **Through the 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi' Kendras**, 800 different medicines are being made available to the poor people at affordable rates.

- **Till 23.03.18, 3279 PMBJP Kendras are functional.** The scheme's product basket has been expanded to cover over 700 medicines and 154 surgicals & consumables covering all therapeutic categories such as Anti-infectives, Anti-diabetics, Cardiovasculars, Anti-cancers, Gastro-intestinal medicines, etc.

- **Per day average sale of per Kendra is Rs. 3300/-** which is equivalent to Rs. 15,000/- sales of branded products. Total Sales till 31st January, 2018 - Rs. 82.84 Crore

- **BPPI is opening 4-5 Kendra's per day across the country.** PMBJP Kendra now present in 33 States/UTs of the country. Out of the total 718 district in the country, we have now covered 584 districts by opening of PMBJP Kendra. SAVINGS · 36 Products - 90-99% savings · 130 Products - 80-90% savings · 73 Products - 70-80% savings · 80 Products - 60-70% savings · 383 Products - 50-60% savings

- **'Affordable & Quality HealthCare for All'** - Availability of Cheaper Medicines · 1084 essential medicines, including lifesaving drugs, brought under Price Control regime after May 2014, giving the consumer total benefit Rs. 9144 crores (As on 21st February, 2018).

Affordable & Accessible Healthcare for Cardiac Patients

- · **Capping of Prices of Cardiac Stents** and Knee implants: Total estimated saving of Rs. 5,950 crores to general public: The capping of prices of Coronary Stents resulted into estimated savings of Rs. 4450 crores and that of Knee Implants into estimated savings of Rs. 1500 crores.

- **Cardiac Stents to cost 85% lesser** · The ceiling price of the Coronary Stents, was revised with effect from 12th February, 2018. All types of cardiac stents are now available in the price range of Rs. 7,660 to Rs. 27, 890.

- **Bare Metal Stents (BMS), having 10% market share,** capped at Rs. 7,660; earlier average price Rs. 45,000 Drug Eluting stents (DES), having 90% market share, capped at Rs. 27,890; earlier average price Rs. 1,21,000

- **Millions of Heart patients in the country** to save up to Rs. 1 lakh; Total estimated Savings to Consumers around Rs. 4450 crores

- **Knee Implants to cost 69% lesser (16th August 2017)** · Knee Implant ceiling prices are fixed with effect from 16th August, 2017. Various types of knee implants are now available in the price range of Rs. 54,720 to 1,13,950.

- · **Cobalt Chromium** (most widely used), capped at Rs. 54,720; earlier average price Rs. 1,58,324 · Special Metal like Titanium & Oxidized Zirconium, capped at Rs. 76,600; earlier average price Rs. 2,49,251

- · **High Flexibility Implant**, capped at Rs. 56,490; earlier average price Rs. 1,81,728 · Revision Implants, capped at Rs. 1,13,950; earlier average price Rs. 2,76,869

- · **Specialized Implants for Cancer & Tumour**, capped at Rs. 1,13,950 · Total estimated Savings to Consumers around Rs. 1500 crores

Assam Gas Cracker Project

- **Assam Gas Cracker Project** (AGCP) is being implemented by Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited (BCPL). Launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 5th February 2016 at BCPL Complex, Lepetkata, Dibrugarh.

- **BCPL has a production capacity** of 2,20,000 tons per annum (TPA) of Polyethylene and 60,000 TPA of Polypropylene, along with other by-products. Natural Gas and Naphtha are the feed stocks.

- **The project has generated direct employment** for around 700 persons in the Plant and indirect employment for around1,500 inside the project complex.

'Skill India'

- · **Around 1.5 lakh underprivileged** and unemployed youth trained under Skill Development Programme by Central Institute for Plastics Engineering & Technology (CIPET)

- · **50% higher number of beneficiaries** as compared to previous Government

Battle of Haifa

- **Haifa day:** The Indian Army commemorates September 23 every year as Haifa Day to pay its respects to the three Indian Cavalry Regiments – Mysore, Hyderabad and Jodhpur Lancers, that helped liberate Haifa following a dashing cavalry action by the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade of the then British Indian Army at the Battle of Haifa in 1918.

- **History and significance of Haifa war and its Indian Cemetery:** Owing to its rail and harbour, Israeli port city of Haifa was a strategic supply base. In addition to Haifa, the Allied Forces also engineered a plan to annexe Nazareth and Damascus in present-day Israel and Syria.

- **On September 23, 1918**, the 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade comprising lancers from the regiments of princely states of Jodhpur and Mysore inflicted heavy assault on positions held by Ottoman Turks in and around the city of Haifa. Eventually, the Indian cavalry brigades fighting under the leadership of British General Edmund Allenby helped liberate Haifa from the clutches of the Turkish-German forces.

- **The victory was even more special as the Indian soldiers** were armed only with lances (a kind of spear) and swords while the Turks had in their possession advance artillery and machine guns. The Indian troops displayed exemplary cavalry skills and valour during what was considered to be the last major cavalry campaign in military history.

- **Teen Murti memorial:** The Teen Murti memorial was constructed in 1922 in the memory of the Indian soldiers from three princely states namely Jodhpur, Hyderabad and Mysore who served present day Gaza strip, Israel and Palestine during the World War I under British India Army.

Mobilise Your City (MYC) programme

- **Based on a proposal made by AFD in 2015**, the European Union has agreed to provide funds of Euro 3.5 million through the AFD to contribute to specific investments and technical assistance components within the Mobilise Your City (MYC) programme in India.

- **About Mobilise Your City (MYC):** MobiliseYourCity (MYC) is a global climate initiative for integrated urban mobility planning, and one of 15 international transport initiatives of the UN Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA). Mobilise Your City (MYC) is part of an international initiative which is supported by the French and the German Governments and was launched at 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) meeting in December, 2015.

- **The MYC is an initiative combining urban mobility objectives and climate** considerations. It aims at providing solutions in a fully integrated manner, analysing different modes of transportation within the urban fabric, with the objective of providing people long-term, sustainable, adequate, reliable and cost-efficient transportation opportunities. The project seeks to back 100 cities worldwide in three years, which are engaged in sustainable urban mobility planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- **In India, the MYC aims** at supporting three pilot cities viz. Nagpur, Kochi and Ahmedabad in their efforts to reduce their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport by implementing urban mobility plans at local level and to help India at national level to improve their sustainable transport policy. The three pilot cities selected under the programme as well as MoHUA will benefit from the Technical Assistance activities.

- **The main components of the proposed assistance are:** To support planning and implementation of sustainable urban transport projects. Support to strengthening institutional capacity for regulating, steering and planning urban mobility. Learning and exchange formats with other cities across India for exchanges on best practices.

Section 377

- **The verdict and its significance:** The Court said gay sex among consenting adults is not an offence. The verdict assumes significance as in the earlier round of litigation in 2013 the Supreme Court had reversed the Delhi high court ruling decriminalising homosexuality or same sex relationship.

- **However, bestiality will continue as an offence.** Any kind of sexual activity with animals shall remain penal offence under Section 377 of the IPC. The judgement is based on the interpretation of Article 14 (Right to Equality); Article 15 (prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth); Article 19 (Freedom of Speech and Expression); and Article 21 (Right to Life and Right to Privacy) of the Indian Constitution.

- **The law:** Section 377 of IPC – which came into force in 1862 – defines unnatural offences. It says, "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine."

- **Delhi HC legalises homosexuality:** The Delhi high court had in July 2009 de-criminalised consensual homosexual acts in private by declaring as unconstitutional a part of Section 377 of IPC that criminalises unnatural sex, saying "the section denies a gay person a right to full personhood…"

- **SC re-criminalises homosexuality:** The Supreme Court chose to reverse the verdict in December 2013. Upholding the constitutional validity of Section 377 IPC, an SC bench headed by Justice GS Singhvi (since retired), put the ball in the Parliament's court, saying it was for the legislature to take a call on the desirability of the controversial provision.

- **Implications for heterosexuals:** The case has implications for heterosexuals also, as consensual sexual acts of adults such as oral and anal sex in private are currently treated as unnatural and punishable under Section 377 IPC.

- **Background:** Homosexuality is considered a taboo in a largely conservative Indian society which appears to be divided on the controversial issue. Freedom loving people (not necessarily belonging to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender or LGBT community) want homosexuality de-criminalised but many still consider it a "deviant behaviour" and not merely a question of one's sexual orientation or preference.

- **International developments:** There have been many positive developments in favour of LGBT community on the international front. In May 2015, Ireland legalised same-sex marriage. The country which had decriminalized homosexuality in 1993 became the first country to allow same sex marriage a national level by popular vote.

- **In June 2015**, the US Supreme Court ruled that same sex marriages were legal. Near home, Nepal legalised homosexuality in 2007 and the new Constitution of the country too gives many rights to the LGBT community.

- **France, UK, Canada, United States, Australia and Brazil** have de-criminalised homosexuality. Other countries like Belgium, Brazil, Canada,France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal,South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay allow either same sex marriage or a civil union.

- **India currently stands with a host of countries** such as Nigeria, Ghana, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Mauritania, Qatar and Pakistan which criminalises homosexuality.

- **Criticisms:** Child abuse and Section 377: Many child rights activists had criticised the Delhi HC verdict de-criminalising homosexuality on the ground that Section 377 was needed to be on the statute book to tackle cases of child abuse. However, the enactment of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 has removed the need to use Section 377 in child sexual abuse cases. POCSO is more child-friendly and much more stringent.

- **Law and morality:** Those against legalising gay sex argue that it is against the moral values of the society. However, activists arguing for it say what is forbidden in religion need not be prohibited in law. They argue that morality cannot be a ground to restrict the fundamental rights of citizens. A legal wrong is necessarily a moral wrong but vice versa is not correct. A moral wrong becomes a legal wrong only when its consequences are for society and not just the person/s committing it.

- **Challenges ahead:** The Supreme Court judgment only deals with a narrow interpretation of Section 377. Besides decriminalising homosexuality, the judgment does not confer any further rights. Gay marriages: Marriages between same-sex partners are not recognised in india, but this can be changed by inserting a provision in the Special Marriage Act.

- **Adoption: Law prohibits adoption of a child by a gay couple.** Inheritance: One partner cannot inherit properties left behind by their same-sex partner, unless a will is drawn in favour of the person. A will, too, can be contested by family members of the partners.

- **On pending criminal cases:** The judgment will have a bearing on criminal cases pending trial, appeal or revision on disposed off cases. The judgment will have no bearing on disposed off cases and old cases cannot be reopened. It opens the flood gates for securing other civil rights.

UPSC=Fever

Ease of Doing Business

- **Ease of Doing Business** 1) Film Facilitation Office (FFO) · Single window clearance to facilitate film shootings by foreign film makers in India.

- · **FFO units set up under NFDC premises** in November 2015 at Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata.

- · **Shooting Permissions for 41 foreign films/projects** given in 2016. 35% increase to film permissions in 2016 over 2015

E-Cinepramaan

- **2) E-Cinepramaan** · The Online Film Certification System of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) was launched on 27th March, 2017.

- · **To facilitate the Hon'ble Prime Minister's** vision of Ease of Doing Business and Digital India.

- · **The complete automation** of the Film Certification Process would enable Good Governance making the entire process transparent and efficient.

- **3) Most Film Friendly State** Award to promote India as a Filming destination. · A cash component of Rs. 1 Crore to the winning state.

Visa for Foreign Filmmakers

- **4) Visa for Foreign Filmmakers** · A new category of visa for foreign filmmakers was created to ease issues related to their entry into the country.

- · **Both 'Film Visa'** and the Film Facilitation Office (FFO) have been aimed to promote India as an attractive filming destination to the world.

Simplification of Annual Renewal process for existing TV channels

- **5) Simplification of Annual Renewal process for existing TV channels** · Online payment through Bharat Kosh Portal of Ministry of Finance from 1 st January, 2017

- · **Permitted Broadcasters** can continue their operations by paying annual fee upto 60 days before the due date for continuation of the channel for a further period of 1year.

Increased reach of Radio across India

- **FM Phase III Auctions** · Batch 1 successfully completed in 2015 after a gap of 9 years Ø 96 new FM channels in 55 cities were started

- **Ø Government received Rs. 1103 Cr** as auction proceeded and Rs.1600 Cr as migration fee from FM Channel owners

- · **2nd batch of Phase III Auctions concluded in 2017** Ø 66 FM channels for 48 cities allotted Ø Government realized Rs 200.24 cr through auction

HIV/AIDS Act, 2017

- **Context:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued a notification for bringing the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017 in force from 10th September, 2018.

- **The Act,** safeguards the rights of people living with HIV and affected by HIV. The provisions of the Act address HIV-related discrimination, strengthen the existing programme by bringing in legal accountability, and establish formal mechanisms for inquiring into complaints and redressing grievances.

- **Highlights of the Act:** Provisions related to the role of governments: As per the Act, central and state governments are obliged to provide for anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and management of opportunistic infections (infections that take advantage of weakness in the immune system and occur frequently). It also prohibits specific acts of discrimination by the state, or any other person, against HIV-positive people, or those living with such people.

- **Provisions related to discrimination**: It lays down penal provisions for any discrimination practised against a person with HIV/AIDS and breach of confidentiality. The protection mandated extends to the fields of employment, healthcare services, educational services, public facilities, property rights, holding public office, and insurance. It also provides for confidentiality of HIV-related information and makes it necessary to get informed consent for undertaking HIV tests, medical treatment and research.

- **Provisions related to ombudsman:** It also provides for an ombudsman. An ombudsman shall be appointed by each state government to inquire into complaints related to the violation of the Act and the provision of health care services. The ombudsman shall submit a report to the state government every six months stating the number and nature of complaints received, the actions taken.

- **Provisions related to guardianship:** Provisions related to guardianship are also specified. A person between the age of 12 to 18 years who has sufficient maturity in understanding and managing the affairs of his HIV or AIDS affected family shall be competent to act as a guardian of another sibling below 18 years of age. The guardianship will apply in matters relating to admission to educational establishments, operating bank accounts, managing property, care and treatment, amongst others.

- **Role of courts:** Cases relating to HIV positive persons shall be disposed off by the court on a priority basis. In any legal proceeding, if an HIV infected or affected person is a party, the court may pass orders that the proceedings be conducted (a) by suppressing the identity of the person, (b) in camera, and (c) to restrain any person from publishing information that discloses the identity of the applicant. When passing any order with regard to a maintenance application filed by an HIV infected or affected person, the court shall take into account the medical expenses incurred by the applicant.

- **Background:** There are approximately 21 lakh persons estimated to be living with HIV in India and the percentage of patients receiving anti-retroviral therapy (ART) treatment currently stands at a mere 25.82% as against the global percentage of 41%, according to the 2015 Global Burden of Diseases (GBD).

e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project

- **About e- VBAB Network project:** E-VBAB Network Project is primarily a technological upgrade and extension of the Pan-African e-Network Project (Phase 1) which was implemented in 48 partner countries across Africa from 2009 till 2017. The Phase 1 of the Project successfully imparted tele-education and tele-medicine by linking educational institutions and hospitals in India with those from the participating African countries.

- **Over the 5 years project duration**, e-VBAB Network Project will provide free tele-education courses in various academic disciplines to 4000 students every year from African countries. The Project will also be utilized for providing free Continuing Medical Education (1000 every year) to African doctors/nurses/para-medical staff. Further, Indian doctors, through this project will provide free medical consultancy to those African doctors who seek such consultancy.

- **In order to operationalise** the e-VBAB Network Project, a Data Centre and Disaster Recovery Centre will be established in India along with Learning Centres in various African countries which decide to be part of the Project.

- **There will be two separate platforms** for e-VidyaBharati (tele-education) and e-AarogyaBharati (tele-medicine) which will link, through a web-based technology, various educational institutions and hospitals in India and the participating African countries.

- **The e-VBAB Network Project** will be completely funded by the Government of India for its entire duration and will be open for participation to all our partner countries in Africa. The Project will be another important milestone in our development partnership with Africa.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

- **He has also cautioned** the government to refrain from setting ambitious credit targets or waiving loans. He also flagged the Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs, run by the Small Industries Development Bank of India, calling it "a growing contingent liability" that needs to be examined with urgency.

- **Background:** A total of ☐6.37 lakh crore has been disbursed under the MUDRA scheme by public and private sector banks, regional rural banks and micro-finance institutions till date, as per data from the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) website.

- **Concerns:** His warnings come at a time the Indian banking is reeling under an unprecedented bad loans problem. The NPAs of the 38 listed banks collectively crossed Rs 10.17 lakh crore in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal, with the 21 public sector banks (PSBs) accounting for the bulk of it.

- **Besides, PSBs have collectively written-off** over Rs 1,154 crore in NPAs in the last fiscal till December 31, which was a 103% jump from the amount written off in 2016-17.

- **About the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) scheme:** The PMMY Scheme was launched in April, 2015. The scheme's objective is to refinance collateral-free loans given by the lenders to small borrowers. The scheme, which has a corpus of Rs 20,000 crore, can lend betweenRs 50,000 and Rs 10 lakh to small entrepreneurs.

- **Banks and MFIs can draw** refinance under the MUDRA Scheme after becoming member-lending institutions of MUDRA.

- **Mudra Loans** are available for non-agricultural activities upto Rs. 10 lakh and activities allied to agriculture such as Dairy, Poultry, Bee Keeping etc, are also covered. Mudra's unique features include a Mudra Card which permits access to Working Capital through ATMs and Card Machines.

- **There are three types of loans under PMMY:** Shishu (up to Rs.50,000). Kishore (from Rs.50,001 to Rs.5 lakh). Tarun (from Rs.500,001 to Rs.10,00,000).

- **Objectives of the scheme:** Fund the unfunded: Those who have a business plan to generate income from a non-farm activity like manufacturing, processing, trading or service sector but don't have enough capital to invest can take loans up to Rs 10 lakh.

- **Micro finance institutions (MFI)** monitoring and regulation: With the help of MUDRA bank, the network of microfinance institutions will be monitored. New registration will also be done.

- **Promote financial inclusion:** With the aim to reach Last mile credit delivery to micro businesses taking help of technology solutions, it further adds to the vision of financial inclusion.

- **Reduce jobless economic growth: Providing micro enterprises with credit facility will help generate employment sources and an overall increase in GDP.**

- **Integration of Informal economy into Formal sector: It will help India also grow its tax base as incomes from the informal sector are non-taxed.**

Apsara – U Reactor

- **About Apsara Nuclear reactor: Apsara is the oldest of India's research reactors. The reactor was designed by the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) and built with assistance from the United Kingdom (which also provided the initial fuel supply consisting of 80% enriched uranium).**

- **Apsara first went critical on 4 August 1956. Apsara is a light water swimming pool-type reactor with a maximum power output of one megawatt thermal (MWt).**

- **The reactor burns enriched uranium in the form of aluminum alloyed curved plates. Fuel for the reactor is supplied under contract from the United Kingdom, provided that the fuel is safeguarded.**

- **The Apsara reactor is utilized for various experiments including neutron activation analysis, radiation damage studies, forensic research, neutron radiography, and shielding experiments. The reactor is also used for research and the production of radioisotopes.**

- **Apsara- Upgraded: "Apsara-upgraded", made indigenously, uses plate type dispersion fuel elements made of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU). By virtue of higher neutron flux, this reactor will increase indigenous production or radio-isotopes for medical application by about fifty percent and would also be extensively used for research in nuclear physics, material science and radiation shielding.**

- **This development has re-emphasised the capability of Indian scientists and Engineers to build, complex facilities for health care, science education and research.**

Model International Center for Transformative AI (ICTAI)

- **This initiative is part of NITI Aayog's** 'National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence' Discussion Paper that focuses on establishing ICTAI in the country through private sector collaboration.

- **Aims of ICTAI:** Based in Bengaluru, the Model ICTAI aims to conduct advanced research to incubate AI-led solutions in three important areas – healthcare, agriculture and smart mobility – by bringing together the expertise of Intel and TIFR.

- **It aims to experiment**, discover and establish best practices in the domains of ICTAI governance, fundamental research, physical infrastructure, compute and service infrastructure needs, and talent acquisition.

- **Goals and objectives:** Through this collaborative effort, the model ICTAI is chartered to develop AI foundational frameworks, tools and assets, including curated datasets and unique AI algorithms.

- **The intent is to develop standards** and support policy development related to information technology such as data-storage, information security, privacy, and ethics for data capture and use.

- **The model Centre also plans** to develop AI foundational technologies to promote applied research that can scale for national impact and will lead to the creation of a vibrant and self-sustaining ecosystem.

- **Another key area of its focus** will be collaboration with industry leaders, startups, and AI services and product companies to productize technologies and IP that are developed at the model ICTAI. And finally, the goal is to support skilling and talent development for world-class AI talent.

- **The learning and best practices** developed through this model ICTAI will be used by NITI Aayog to set up the future ICTAIs across country.

- **What is artificial intelligence (AI)?** Artificial Intelligence comes from computer systems that have been programmed to — or have learnt to — do tasks that would otherwise require human intelligence. Many apps and software are already making mundane work easier by doing a certain part of it for us, based on acquired intelligence.

- **Concerns associated:** Automation threatens 69% of the jobs in India, while it's 77% in China, according to a World Bank research. The transition is expected to happen in a decade, according to experts. Therefore, if automation is not planned well and addressed holistically, it is a disaster in the making.

- **New opportunities:** While there is a risk to jobs due to these trends, the good news is that a huge number of new jobs are getting created as well in areas like cybersecurity, cloud, big data, machine learning and AI. The new job roles that will dominate the IT workforce are within digital domains such as big data, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing and cybersecurity. It is clearly a time of career pivot for IT professionals to make sure they are where the growth is.

- **Policy on AI:** The Union ministry of electronics and information technology, in October 2017, set up an internal committee to advise the government on a policy on artificial intelligence (AI). The expert committee will advise the IT ministry on the most apt technologies for India. The government's main focus is to reduce cyber attacks with AI.

- **Need for a policy on AI:** The artificial intelligence market is estimated to touch $153 billion in 2020 and expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 45.4% from 2016 to 2022. However, AI is widely seen as a major challenge in generation of employment as many companies are likely to depend more on it to cut down on human resources.

- **Globally too, there is a growing interest in AI**. In 2016, the White House initiated work on Preparing for the future of artificial intelligence; in the UK, the House of Commons committee on S&T looked at robotics and artificial intelligence while in 2017, the State Council of China started work on the next generation artificial intelligence development plan.

- **Seven- point strategy:** The government has recently drawn up a seven-point strategy that would form the framework for India's strategic plan to use AI.

- **The strategy includes developing methods** for human machine interactions; ensuring safety and security of AI systems; creating a competent workforce in line with AI and R&D needs, understanding and addressing the ethical, legal and societal implications of AI, measuring and evaluating AI technologies through standards and benchmarks, among others.

- **Way ahead:** AI is a complex subject; it would be simplistic to look at it as all bad or all good. But robots and AI taking away middle-class, manufacturing jobs in the not-so-distant future is a very real prospect that will have to be addressed by governments sooner than they probably think.

India's first missile tracking ship is readying for sea trials

- **Key facts:** This will be the first of its kind ocean surveillance ship being built as part of the efforts to strengthen the country's strategic weapons programme.

- **Its induction will put India** in the elite of club of a few countries that have such a sophisticated ocean surveillance ship.

- **It has the capacity** to carry 300-strong crew with hi-tech gadgets and communication equipment, powered by two diesel engines, and a large deck capable of helicopter landing.

Yudh Abhyas 2018:

- **As part of the ongoing Indo-US defence cooperation**, a joint military training Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 will be held at Chaubattia in Uttarakhand. This will be the 14th edition of the joint military exercise hosted alternately by both countries.

- **The joint exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018** will simulate a scenario where both nations will work together in counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment in mountainous terrain under United Nation charter.

Rail Sahyog:

- **It will provide platform for Corporates and PSUs** to fund creation of amenities at railway stations through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

- **This portal will allow companies to register their requests** for contributing to create amenities at railway stations through their CSR funds. These requests will be processed by Railway officials and based on tprinciple of first come first serve, requests will be shortlisted.

- **Selected applicants will be intimated to deposit the funds with Railways or its nominated agencies like RITES or RAILTEL etc. The nominated agency will get the work executed thereafter.**

- **It will provide opportunity for industry, companies, associations to collaborate with Indian Railways. Fund utilized for creation of amenities will be beneficial for passengers and for neighbourhood of railway vicinity.**

Community Radio

- **· 201 CR Stations operational across India. · Subsidy increased for setting up of CRS from 50 % to 90% in the North Eastern States &75% in other States, subject to a maximum limit of Rs. 7.5 lakhs**

- **Akashvani Maitree · Exclusive service for Bangladesh and Bengali Diaspora launched by All India Radio**

- **Films as new Medium of Communication · Exhibition of Children's Film in Schools - 5 Lakhs children audience covered through 1400 shows during April 2016 to December 2016**

- **· Swachh Bharat Short Film Festival organized for 1 st time. Over 4000 entries received in different languages through Crowd sourcing. The Best Film was awarded a cash prize of Rupees 10 lakhs, Three Second Best Films were awarded Rupees 5 lakhs each and six Third Best Films were awarded Rupees 2 lakhs each.**

- **· Patriotic Film Festival being organized for the first time across India · First ever BRICS Film Festival held in Delhi – Twenty movies, four each from the five participating countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa) was selected for the screening competition.**

Skill Development

- · **FTII new SKIFT (Skilling India In Film and Television)initiative to conduct short- term courses in Tier 2 cities**

- · **MoU signed between FTII and Canon. Canon to contribute as Technology Partner in SKIFT, providing cameras and accessories free of cost for the courses.**

- · **Diploma course in Urdu Journalism at IIMC upgraded to the level of PG Diploma in Urdu Journalism of nine months duration from academic session 2016-17**

- · **A first of its kind 5 month course on writing for TV fiction and web series in the country was launched by Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) to cater to industry's growing need for long-format storytelling.**

- · **Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) and Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth (SLBSRSV) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for conducting a joint three months Advanced Certificate Programme in Sanskrit Journalism. Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) launched a Post Graduate Diploma Course in Marathi Journalism from its Western Regional Campus at Amravati in Maharashtra on 1st August,2017.**

Prasar Bharati - Doordarshan

- · **Kisan Channel: It was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 26 th May, 2015. The 24x7 Kisan Channel telecasts updated information on agriculture and related subjects.**

- · A separate 24x7 DD Channel for Jharkhand was announced. DD Bihar will telecast DD Ranchi programmes till the launch of 24x7 channels. 2 new Shortwave. Solid State digital transmitters of 100 KW to broadcast across the border for Afghanistan-Pakistan region were also announced.

- · Swachhta Samachar: Special 5 minutes Bulletin on Swachhta has been started on all weekdays. The Bulletin includes important news stories, people's initiative and feature stories related to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan along with a Swachhta Tip.

- · Doordarshan Sports organized Doordarshan Sports Conclave 2017, the first ever televised conclave of its kind, under the theme "Celebrating Sports in India", to discuss future of Indian Sports.

- · Innovative news format has been brought out by DD News § Special 5 minute bulletin daily for Hearing Impaired § Khabar Jaldi Jaldi - 4-minute news covering major national, international, business and sports news. § 5 Minutes Flash 15: This 5-minute news show has 15 important news items in a news capsule form, covering major national, international, business and sports news.

- § Vaarta Sanskrit Samachar: This daily news bulletin of 10 minutes duration in Sanskrit covers all the important news.

- § Good News India: A new weekly half-an- hour show covering national and international happenings of positive nature.

- · Tejaswini: A special half-an- hour programme on women achievers in interview format has been started. It delves into the life, challenges and successes of inspirational women.

- · A new Doordarshan channel ArunPrabha would be launched soon, which would show richness, variety and diversity of local culture and would seamlessly integrate North East with the entire country.

All India Radio

- · Union Cabinet approved the way for conducting the auction of 683 channels in 236 cities in subsequent batches. § The auction will usher in new/enhanced experience of FM radio in more cities. With the complete roll- out of FM Phase- III auctions, all the 29 States and 6 out of the 7 UTs (except Dadra & Nagar Haveli) will be covered by private FM radio broadcasting.

- § Likely to generate direct and indirect employment to more than 10,000 persons on a pan India basis. § These auctions will yield estimated revenue more than Rs. 1,100 crore.

- · Akashvani Maitree: An exclusive service for Bangladesh and Bengali diaspora launched by All India Radio. Baluchi Multimedia website and Mobile App for greater people to people contact also launched. · All India Radio (AIR) Resources signed 221 fresh Agreement with Private FM broadcasters for migration of 229 channels from Phase-II to Phase-III

- · Digitisation Drive Ø Live streaming on multimedia website and mobile app of Baluchi service of ESD launched expanding its reach to Baluchi Diaspora world over. Ø Airworldservice – mobile platform for foreign and Indian language services of ESD on Android and IOS launched.

- Ø Multimedia websites for 16 language services of ESD enhancing its global Ø outreach has been launched supplementing the terrestrial transmission.

- Ø AIR, Fazilka (Punjab) has been started to make Urdu Service available in FM mode in Pakistan Ø 24X7 niche 'RAAGAM' channel dedicated to Indian classical music launched.

- · FMisation of entire Vividh Bharati: All India Radio has completed FMisation of entire Vividh Bharati by replacing 4 Medium Wave transmitters of Vividh Bharati at 4 metros viz. Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi & Chennai.

MoU signed between Publications Division and Sasta Sahitya Mandal for Joint Publication of books

- · MoU signed between Publications Division and Sasta Sahitya Mandal for Joint Publication of books, to sensitise the young generation about India's rich and diverse culture and history. It would promote availability of good literature for the people on diverse topics.

- · Agreement on "Cooperation in the field of Information, Communication and Media" was signed between India and Ethiopia. The Agreement will encourage cooperation between mass media tools such as radio, print media, TV, social media etc. to provide more opportunities to the people of both the nations and create public accountability.

- · 360-degree Multimedia Campaigns such as International Yoga Day, Swachh Bharat, Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Rashtriya Ekta Diwas were launched by the Government. It entailed Multimedia Exhibitions, social media campaigns using Infographics, animations, graphic plates, short videos, live streaming of events /conferences etc.

- · 6th National Photography Awards organized. Shri Raghu Rai conferred Lifetime Achievement Award. Professional Photographer of the year award to Shri K.K. Mustafah and Amateur Photographer of the year award to Shri Ravinder Kumar.

- · Three Heritage Books on the occasion of Centenary Celebrations of Champaran Satyagraha released.

- · Set of books titled 'Swachh Jungle ki kahani – Dadi ki Zubani' Books published in 15 Indian languages by Publications Division to enable development of cleanliness habit amongst children released.

- · "Saath Hai Vishwaas Hai, Ho Raha Vikas Hai" Exhibition organized and was put up across state capitals for duration of 5-7 days showcasing the achievements of the Government in the last 3 years in various sectors.

- · 100 Volumes of Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi released. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi'(CWMG) is a monumental document of Gandhiji's thoughts which he spoke and wrote from 1884, when Mahatma was a 15 year old boy, till his assassination on January 30, 1948.

- · Special Webpage on Goods and Services Tax (GST) http://pib.nic.in/gst was created on PIB Website and is a one stop platform for all information on the new tax regime.

- · RNI Annual Report - Press in India, an Important Index of Print Media was released. The report gave a comprehensive analysis of the contours of the growth for the industry specially the growth amongst regional language publications.

- · A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on "Cooperation in the field of Mass Media" and an "Audio-Visual Co-Production Agreement" has been signed between the Government of the Republic of India and Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh on 8th April, 2017. The MoU would facilitate training/study tour of personnel in the field of mass media and public relations and the Audio-Visual Co-Production Agreement would cover co-production of films, documentaries, and animations films.

- Broadcast Sector · Analog signals in Phase III Urban Areas switched off. "Authorized officers" under Sec 11 of the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act can seize the equipment of the MSOs/Cable Operators, if they continue to carry analogue signal in Phase III urban areas after 31st January, 2017.

- · Digital Radio Round Table Conference organized. Digital Radio technology would provide listeners with significantly improved audio quality and service reliability at an affordable price. All India Radio has already completed the technical installation and upgradation of 37 powerful transmitters in the first phase of Digitization of Radio Broadcast.

- · 14 short films produced by Doordarshan on success stories of various Flagship schemes of the Government which had positively impacted people's lives and had brought a transformational change in the country.

- · A separate 24x7 DD Channel for Jharkhand announced. DD Bihar to telecast DD Ranchi programmes till the launch of 24x7 channel.

- · 2 new Shortwave Solid State digital transmitters of 100 KW to broadcast across the border for Afghanistan- Pakistan region announced. · New website of DD News launched. · Sardar Patel Memorial Lecture 2017 was organised.

Indian Panorama Film Festival organized in Delhi.

- · · Film Condition Assessment Project under National Film Heritage Mission launched. This one-of-its-kind project in the world, for film preservation, will make rich filmic heritage available for the future generations to come.

- · The condition of about 1,32,000 film reels at NFAI would be assessed and each film reel will be tracked and monitored through RFID tagging, during the first phase.

- · North East Film Festival – Fragrances from the North East organized at National Film Archives of India, Pune. 10 film makers from the North East sponsored for the first time to attend the IFFI in Goa.

- · Bhojpuri Film Festival organized in Delhi. The festival includes a National Award winning film "Kab Hoi Gavana Hamaar" and screening of two films selected in Indian Panorama section of IFFI - Nitin Chandra's Deswa, and Mangesh Joshi's film "He".

- · India & Ukraine to strengthen bilateral cooperation through the medium of Film Festivals and utilizing the Film Facilitation Office platform established by India.

- · MoU signed between FTII and Canon to promote short courses in Film & Television. Canon to support skill-oriented courses as Technology Partner. These short courses will be held in collaboration with State Governments, Universities and Educational institutions.

- · New category of visa for foreign filmmakers created to ease issues related to their entry into the country. Both the Film Visa and the Film Facilitation Office (FFO) have been aimed to promote India as an attractive filming destination to the world. · 64th National Film Awards organized in Delhi. Kassav awarded Best Feature Film.

- · Renowned Film Director & Actor Shri Kasinadhuni Viswanath to be conferred Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2016

- · The 48th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), 2017 was organised in Goa. A Total of 196 Films from 82 Countries, over 64 India Premieres of International films, 3 world Premieres, over 28 Oscar submissions were screened, for the first-time ever Retrospective of James Bond film screened. A special section of Restored Classics, a special Focus on Canada curated by the Toronto International Film Festival showcased.

- · Mumbai International Film Festival for Documentary, Short and Animation Film (MIFF) 2018 got overwhelming response, 792 films in fray for Golden & Silver Conch Awards. It will be inaugurated on 28 January, 2018 at the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai.

Cabinet approves New Umbrella Scheme "Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan" (PM-AASHA)

- Cabinet PM-AASHA will provide MSP assurance to farmers Giving a major boost to the pro-farmer initiatives of the Government and in keeping with its commitment and dedication for the Annadata, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a new Umbrella Scheme "Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan' (PM-AASHA). The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018.

- This is an unprecedented step taken by Govt. of India to protect the farmers' income which is expected to go a long way towards the welfare of farmers. Government has already increased the MSP of kharif crops by following the principle of 1.5 times the cost of production. It is expected that the increase in MSP will be translated to farmer's income by way of robust procurement mechanism in coordination with the State Governments.

- Components of PM-AASHA: The new Umbrella Scheme includes the mechanism of ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers and is comprised of Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS).

- The other existing schemes of Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) for procurement of paddy, wheat and nutri-cereals/coarse grains and of Ministry of Textile for cotton and jute will be continued for providing MSP to farmers for these crops.

- Cabinet has also decided that participation of private sector in procurement operation needs to piloted so that on the basis of learnings the ambit of private participation in procurement operations may be increased. Therefore in addition to PDPS.

- It has been decided that for oilseeds, states have the option to roll out Private Procurement Stockist Scheme (PPSS) on pilot basis in selected district/APMC(s) of district involving the participation of private stockiest. The pilot district/selected APMC(s) of district will cover one or more crop of oilseeds for which MSP is notified. Since this is akin to PSS, in that in involves physical procurement of the notified commodity, it shall substitute PSS/PDPS in the pilot districts.

- The selected private agency shall procure the commodity at MSP in the notified markets during the notified period from the registered farmers in consonance with the PPSS Guidelines, whenever the prices in the market fall below the notified MSP and whenever authorized by the state/UT government to enter the market and maximum service charges up to 15% of the notified MSP will be payable.

- Expenditure: The Cabinet has decided to give additional government guarantee of Rs.16,550 crore making it Rs. 45,550 crore in total.

- In addition to this, budget provision for procurement operations has also been increased and Rs. 15,053 crore is sanctioned for PM-AASHA implementation. The scheme henceforth is a reflection of Government's commitment and dedication to our 'Annadata'.

- Procurement over the years: During financial years 2010-14 total procurement was Rs. 3500 crore only whereas during financial years 2014-18, it has risen 10 times and reached to Rs. 34,000 crore. For procurement of these agri-commodities during 2010-14, Government Guarantee of Rs. 2500 crore was provided with expenditure of only Rs. 300 crore; while during 2014-18, Guarantee amount has been increased to Rs. 29,000 crore with expenditure of Rs. 1,000 crore.

- Details: Government of India is working with the holistic approach of solving any issue rather than in fragments. Increasing MSP is not adequate and it is more important that farmers should get full benefit of the announced MSP.

- For this, government realizes that it is essential that if price of the agriculture produce market is less than MSP, then in that case State Government and Central Government should purchase either at MSP or work in a manner to provide MSP for the farmers through some other mechanism.

- With this approach, Cabinet has approved the Umbrella Scheme of PM-AASHA with three sub-schemes i.e. Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) and pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PDPS).

- In Price Support Scheme (PSS), physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with proactive role of State governments. It is also decided that in addition to NAFED, Food Cooperation of India (FCI) will take up PSS operations in states /districts. The procurement expenditure and losses due to procurement will be borne by Central Government as per norms.

- **Under Price Deficiency Payment Scheme this scheme (PDPS), it is proposed to cover all oilseeds for which MSP is notified. In this direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling/modal price will be made to pre-registered farmers selling his produce in the notified market yard through a transparent auction process. All payment will be done directly into registered bank account of the farmer.**

- **This scheme does not involve any physical procurement of crops as farmers are paid the difference between the MSP price and Sale/modal price on disposal in notified market. The support of central government for PDPS will be given as per norms.**

Pro-farmer initiatives of the Government:

- **The Government is committed to realizing the vision of doubling farmers' income by 2022. The emphasis is on enhancing productivity, reducing cost of cultivation and strengthening post-harvesting management, including market structure. Several market reforms have been initiated. These include Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act, 2017 and Model Contract Farming and Services Act, 2018. Many States have taken steps to adopt these through legislation.**

- **Efforts are on for a new market architecture, so as to ensure that farmers get remunerative prices on their produce. These include setting up of Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) so as to promote 22,000 number of retail markets in close proximity of farm gate; competitive and transparent wholesale trade at APMC through eNAM and a robust and pro-farmer export policy.**

- **Besides, several other pro-farmers' initiatives such as implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri KrishiSinchai Yojana, ParamparagatKrishi Vikas Yojana and distribution of Soil Health Cards have been undertaken. The commitment for farmer welfare is also reflected by unprecedented decision of announcing minimum support price based on the formula of 1.5 times the cost of cultivation.**

Suresh Prabhu to participate in G-20, Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting in Argentina

- **Union Minister of Commerce & Industry** and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu, will participate in the G-20, Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting, being held in Mar del Plata in Argentina on 14th – 15th September 2018.

- **The meeting will provide an opportunity** for a dialogue on current developments in international trade and its implications for the global economy. The Ministerial Meeting will discuss about building an inclusive trade system that contributes to sustainable and shared growth.

- **Trade and investment** must benefit all and countries must jointly address both the opportunities and challenges of globalization, innovation and technological advancements.

- **The Ministerial Meeting will examine the inter relationship between trade and development** with a special emphasis on the need to promote further integration of small and medium sized companies into international trade, and the opportunities posed by the digital economy and new technologies.

- **Ahead of the meeting**, the Commerce Minister said that India will work along with other countries to reform WTO and ensure that it continues to be an engine for global trade. The Minister further said that India looks forward to working with all member countries for an agreeable, forward looking, reform agenda.

- **Through the G-20** forum India will take this idea forward in mission mode. Further, the key issues that will be discussed in the Ministerial Meeting include global value chains, the new industrial revolution and the international trade outlook. The multilateral trading system is facing unprecedented challenges in the wake of protectionist measures by some countries, which is not compatible with the WTO.

- **G-20 is made up of 19 countries** and the EU. The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The other invited members are Chile, Netherlands, Spain and representatives of regional groups of Jamaica, Rwanda, Singapore and Senegal.

- **G-20 members represent 75% of international trade, half of foreign direct investment flows, half of foreign flows and 80% of global production.**

District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRC)

- **The participants in this one day conference** include District Magistrates of 263 districts were DDRCs have been set up, Principal Secretaries Social Welfare, reputed NGOs, District Social Welfare officers, eminent Doctors etc.

- **The conference** is organized for taking the message of DDRCs further, which play a crucial and central role for the wellbeing of Divyangjan and to give clarification about the mechanism of schemes and disseminate its success stories.

- **About DDRC:** District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRC) provide comprehensive services to persons with disabilities and facilitate creation of infrastructure and capacity building at the district level for awareness generation, rehabilitation and training of rehabilitation professionals.

- **The District Disability Rehabilitation Centres** are set up under the Plan Scheme- "Scheme for implementation of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995 (SIPDA)." 310 districts have been identified and 263 DDRCs have been set up.

- **Objectives of the District Disability Rehabilitation Centres are as under:** Awareness generation, early intervention and assessment of the need of assistive devices to divyangjans. Therapeutic services such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy etc. to divyangjans through rehabilitation professionals. Equipment for rehabilitation services.

- **Role of State Government:** State Governments are expected to play a more pro-active role in the effective working of DDRCs. In order to ensure greater involvement of State/District Administration, the State Government may suitably supplement the honorarium and other requirements of the DDRCs for undertaking their various activities in an effective manner.

- **State Governments** may authorized District Collectors in their capacity as Chairperson of DMT, to make minor modifications for effective functioning of DDRCs, considering the ground realities within the broad stipulation of the DDRC Scheme.

- **State Government may also authorize** the District Collectors to make interim advances out of the local funds placed at their disposal to tide over the difficulties caused in the field due to procedural delays in release of central funds.

Section 498A

- **Section 498A Latest verdict:** The apex court, while modifying the verdict given by its two-judge bench, said that there is no scope for courts for constitutionally filling up gaps in penal law. The earlier order had provisions for setting up of a committee to deal with complaints of dowry harassment.

- **Erasing role of NALSA** (National Legal Services Authority) and NGOs, the apex court said courts are there to protect harassed husbands and their relatives, who are not remotely connected to matrimonial cruelty, by granting them anticipatory bail.

- **Background:** A batch of pleas were filed in the Supreme Court seeking revisiting of a judgement that had reduced the severity of the anti-dowry law on the offence of subjecting a married woman to cruelty by spouse and in-laws.

- **A two-judge bench of the apex court** in July last year had voiced concern over "abuse" of section 498 A (subjecting a married woman to cruelty) and passed a slew of directions, including that no arrest should "normally be effected" without verifying allegations as violation of human rights of innocents could not be brushed aside.

- **Section 498A:** Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code deals with husband or relatives of husbands subjecting a woman to cruelty. Punishment under the Section is a maximum of three years and was so far a non-bailable offence.

- **What necessitated the court's intervention?** The anti-dowry law was enacted with the laudable object of punishing cruelty at the hands of husband or his relatives – particularly when such cruelty drives the wife to suicide. However, complaints are mounting up over the years alleging misuse of the anti-dowry harassment law – framed in 1983 following a spate of dowry-related deaths – by disgruntled wives. The law is also being misused.

- **A growing trend is being observed among women involved** in marital discord to abuse Section 498A of IPC to rope in their husbands' relatives — including parents, minor children, siblings and grandparents — in criminal cases. Therefore, it is high time such frivolous cases which violate the human rights of innocent is checked.

- **Significance of this move:** This is a shift from the dominant judicial conception of women as victims who would silently suffer injustice rather than bring disrepute to their family by taking domestic conflict outside the four walls of the home. Going by the popular portrait, it is only the worst victim of abuse among women who approach the court for redress. With its latest observations, the court broke away from the reigning perception to rule that in dowry cases, the account of the alleged victim need not be taken at face value.

- **Way ahead:** Though Section 498A of the IPC was enacted to protect women from cruelty in matrimonial homes, its misuse to harass the other side too is causing social unrest. There should be gender justice for women as dowry has a chilling effect on marriage on the one hand. On the other hand, there is right to life and personal liberty of the man.

'Exporting Corruption Report'

- **'Exporting Corruption Report' Highlights of the report:** In this 2018 report, China, Hong Kong, India and Singapore –- all with 2% or more of world exports, but not parties to the OECD (Anti-Bribery) Convention –- are classified for the first time and all fall into the lowest level (little or no enforcement).

- **This poor performance argues for these countries'** accession to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. They are, however, parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, which also calls for enforcement against foreign bribery. Transparency International urges them to join the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention.

- **Performance of India:** India is among four countries with "no or little enforcement" mechanism to check foreign bribery. The report asks India to criminalise foreign bribery and introduce effective legislation to protect whistleblowers in the private sector.

- **The report notes that:** The Indian government does not publish statistics on its foreign bribery enforcement and does not disclose such statistics on request. The authorities do not disclose any information about unpublished cases related to bribery of foreign public officials by Indians.

- **India is also not clear whether the governmental** enforcement and investigative agencies collect information related to foreign bribery, separately or not. There are also inadequacies in implementation of Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) Treaty. The translation of documents into foreign languages is a major factor slowing down the MLA process.

- **Challenges ahead:** As foreign bribery is not yet criminalised in India, the adequacy of the enforcement system in relation to this specific offence cannot be assessed. However, certain shortcomings in the enforcement system, in particular those evident from current enforcement of domestic corruption, are also a concern for foreign bribery enforcement. In particular, while the Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act prescribe criminal and civil liability for domestic corruption, the reality is that actions taken against the perpetrators have been few.

- **Concerns expressed by the report:** If China, Hong Kong, India and Singapore do not enforce hard-won international standards for conducting business, competitors from countries that do enforce will find themselves disadvantaged. This may lead to a reduction in enforcement, destabilising the global marketplace. The real losers will be the global economy and people in countries affected by exported corruption, especially grand corruption.

- **OECD Anti-Bribery Convention:** The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention was adopted in 1997 to address the supply side of international corruption. Its aim is to create a level playing field between OECD countries by subjecting countries to the same criminal standards. Before the OECD Convention, the US was the only OECD country that prohibited its companies from bribing foreign officials. The OECD Convention does not address private (business-to-business) bribery.

- **There are now 44 parties to the convention, 36 of them members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). Highlights:** Criminalisation: Prohibits the bribery of foreign officials. Enforcement: Includes an obligation to prosecute companies suspected of bribing public officials abroad.

- **Cooperation:** Encourages enhanced collaboration between the law enforcement agencies of signatory countries. Tax Deductions: Bans the tax deductibility of bribes to foreign public officials.

- **Whistleblowing:** Recommends the establishment of effective whistleblowing mechanisms. Monitoring: The OECD carries out rigorous peer-review examinations monitoring the level of implementation of the OECD Convention and OECD recommendations.

Nuclear Suppliers Group

- **Nuclear Suppliers Group What's the issue?** India has been seeking entry into the 48-member elite nuclear club, which controls nuclear trade, but China has repeatedly stonewalled its bid.

- **While India, which is backed by the US and a number of western countries** has garnered the support of a majority of the group's members, China has stuck to its stand that new members should sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), making India's entry difficult as the group is guided by the consensus principle. India is not a signatory to the NPT.

- **What is NSG?** Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials. Interestingly, the NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.

- **Background:** India sought membership of the NSG in 2008, but its application hasn't been decided on, primarily because signing the NPT or other nuclear moratoriums on testing is a pre-requisite. However, India has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.

- **India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan** are among the four UN member states which have not signed the NPT, the international pact aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

- **Why India should be granted NSG membership?** In this game of developing nuclear weapons India has not indulged in any dubious/clandestine activity and its programme has been developed solely by years of hard work indigenously. By this single act India has shown that developing a credible nuclear weapons programme through honest and civilian means is possible for any country having high-level scientific manpower and materials.

- **Besides, by declaring a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear** tests India has effectively acted in sense and spirit of NPT/CTBT provisions. By steering its programme only as a minimum deterrence and pledging NFU unless faced with an attack of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), India has established itself as a responsible nuclear state.

- **Benefits associated with NSG membership- Once admitted, an NSG member state gets:** Timely information on nuclear matters. Contributes by way of information. Has confirmed credentials. Can act as an instrument of harmonization and coordination. Is part of a very transparent process.

"Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund"

- **"Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund"** Context: The government has handed over a Rs 440 crore cheque to the NDDB from the Dairy Processing and Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF), marking the formal launch of the fund set up to provide soft loans to modernise and raise capacity of dairy cooperatives.

- **About DIDF:** NABARD has set up the DIDF with a corpus of Rs 8,004 crore to bring more dairy farmers into organised milk marketing through cooperatives. The fund is implemented through National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and National Cooperative Development Corporation(NCDC).

- **The major activities of DIDF:** The project will focus on building an efficient milk procurement system by setting up of chilling infrastructure & installation of electronic milk adulteration testing equipment, creation/modernization/expansion of processing infrastructure and manufacturing faculties for Value Added Products for the Milk Unions/ Milk Producer Companies.

- **Management of DIDF:** The project will be implemented by National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and National Dairy Development Cooperation (NCDC) directly through the End Borrowers such as Milk Unions, State Dairy Federations, Multi-state Milk Cooperatives, Milk Producer Companies and NDDB subsidiaries meeting the eligibility criteria under the project.

- **An Implementation and Monitoring Cell (IMC)** located at NDDB, Anand, will manage the implementation and monitoring of day-to-day project activities. The end borrowers will get the loan @ 6.5% per annum. The period of repayment will be 10 years with initial two years moratorium.

- **The respective State Government** will be the guarantor of loan repayment. Also for the project sanctioned if the end user is not able to contribute its share; State Government will contribute the same.

- **Benefits from DIDF:** With this investment, 95,00,000 farmers in about 50,000 villages would be benefitted. Additional Milk processing capacity of 126 lakh litre per day, milk drying capacity of 210 MT per day, milk chilling capacity of 140 lakh litre per day, installation of 28000 Bulk Milk Coolers (BMCs) along with electronic milk adulteration testing equipment and value added products manufacturing capacity of 59.78 lakh litre per day of milk equivalent shall be created.

- **Employment Generation Potential:** The implementation of DIDF scheme will generate direct and indirect employment opportunities for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manpower. Direct employment opportunities for about 40,000 people will be created under the scheme through project activities like expansion & modernisation of existing milk processing facilities, setting up of new processing plants, establishment of manufacturing facilities for value added products and setting up of Bulk Milk Coolers (BMCs) at village level.

- **About 2 lakh indirect employment opportunities** will be created on account of expansion of milk and milk product marketing operations from existing Tier I, II & III to Tier IV, V & VI cities/towns etc. This will lead to deployment of more marketing staff by Milk Cooperatives, appointment of distributors and opening of additional milk booths/retail outlets in urban/rural locations.

- **With the increase in milk procurement operations** of the Milk Cooperatives, there would be generation of additional manpower employment for supervision of increased milk procurement operations, transportation of milk from villages to processing units, and increased input delivery services like Artificial Insemination (AI) services, Veterinary Services, etc.

- **Conclusion:** The dairy processing infrastructure of cooperatives needs modernisation and capacity enhancement, and with most cooperatives sharing their profits with milk producers, they need support.

NASA's Orion spacecraft

- **NASA's Orion spacecraft Context:** NASA has successfully completed the final test to qualify Orion's space capsule's parachute system for flights with astronauts, ahead of its mission to send humans to the Moon and beyond.

- **The parachute system** is the only system that must assemble itself in mid-air and must be able to keep the crew safe in several failure scenarios, such as mortar failures that prevent a single parachute type to deploy, or conditions that cause some of the parachute textile components to fail.

- **About Orion:** NASA's Orion spacecraft is built to take humans farther than they've ever gone before. Orion will serve as the exploration vehicle that will carry the crew to space, provide emergency abort capability, sustain the crew during the space travel, and provide safe re-entry from deep space return velocities.

- **Orion will launch on NASA's new heavy-lift rocket**, the Space Launch System. Orion will first fly with astronauts aboard during Exploration Mission-2, a mission that will venture near the Moon and farther from Earth than ever before, launching atop NASA's Space Launch System rocket — which will be the world's most powerful rocket.

National Water Awards:

- **Context:** Union Ministry of Water Resources has instituted National Water Awards. The awards will be given for 13 categories. Key facts: The objective of these awards is to encourage all stakeholders including NGOs, Gram Panchayats, Urban local bodies, water user associations, institutions, corporate sector, Individuals etc. for adopting innovative practices of ground water augmentation by rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge.

- **It also seeks to encourage water use efficiency**, recycling and reuse of water and creating awareness through people's participation in targeted areas for ground water resources development, adequate capacity building etc.

Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna Rolled Out

- **Relaxation in the Eligibility Conditions for Availing Super Specialty Treatment Enhancement in Funeral Expenses** The ESI Corporation during its 175th Meeting held yesterday in New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment(I/C) has taken some very important decisions towards improvements in its services and benefits being provided to Insured Persons and their dependants.

- **Considering the change** in employment pattern and the current scenario of employment in India which has transformed from a long term employment to fixed short term engagement in the form of contract and temping, the ESI Corporation has approved a Scheme named "ATAL BIMIT VYAKTI KALYAN YOJNA" for Insured Persons (IP) covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948. This scheme is a relief payable in cash directly to their Bank Account in case of unemployment and while they search for new engagement. Detailed instructions including eligibility conditions, application format, etc. will be issued separately.

- **ESI Corporation** has approved the proposal for reimbursement of Rs. 10/- per person to the employers to encourage the seeding of Aadhar (UID) in ESIC database of their workers and their family members. It will curtail the multiple registrations of same Insured Persons and thus enable them to avail the benefits requiring longer contributory conditions.

- **ESI Corporation** has approved the proposal for relaxing the eligibility conditions for availing Super Specialty treatment has now been relaxed from earlier insurable employment of 2 years to 06 months with contribution requirement of only 78 days. Besides, the eligibility for availing Super Specialty treatment for dependents of Insured Person has now been relaxed to insurable employment of one year with 156 days of contributions. This relaxation will immensely help the Insured Persons and their beneficiaries to avail Super Specialty treatment free of cost as per revised eligibility.

- **ESI Corporation** has approved the proposal for increasing the Funeral Expenses from existing Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 15,000/- being paid on the death of Insured Person.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- **Context:** Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) recently marked the anniversary of the launch of scheme as Matru Vandana Saptah.

- **National level achievement of the scheme post an year's** implementation on grounds is 48.11 Lakhs of women enrollment under the scheme till September 13, 2018, out of which 37.30 Lakhs have been paid the maternity benefit which accounts to a total fund disbursement of Rs1168.63 Crores.

- **About PMMVY:** Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The IGMSY was launched in 2010.

- **The scheme** is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first live birth. It provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.

- **Exceptions:** The maternity benefits under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) are available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Government or Public Sector Undertaking or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.

- **Funding:** The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40 while for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10. It is 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.

- **Need for special attention:** Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect majority of women in India. In India, every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. An undernourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby. When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle since the changes are largely irreversible.

- **Owing to economic and social distress** many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy. Furthermore, they resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it, thus preventing their bodies from fully recovering on one hand, and also impeding their ability to exclusively breastfeed their young infant in the first six months.

Swayangsiddha Initiative

- **Context:** To combat human trafficking, the West Bengal government has rolled out a scheme, Swayangsiddha, in its different districts.

- **Background:** As the per the NCRB data West Bengal has highest recorded case of trafficking among the States.

- **Highlights of the scheme:** Swayangsiddha, which means self-reliance, will be executed by the West Bengal Police. The scheme aims to empower young boys and girls to make informed choices so that they are less vulnerable to trafficking and child marriage. Swayangsiddha Groups have been formed in schools and colleges with interested students. These groups were formed with students between the age group of 12 to 21 years.

- **Objectives of the mission:** Raising awareness on human, gender and child rights and strengthening prevention of human trafficking and child marriage using a converging approach. Engaging youth from different schools and colleges to combat human trafficking and child marriage.

- **Strengthening response mechanism** in collaboration with Police and child protection committees to build safe community. Strengthening access to schemes and entitlements on education, training, livelihood and food security for vulnerable groups.

National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)

- **Context:** The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) has released the report HIV Estimations 2017.

- **Key facts:** The HIV Estimations 2017 is the 14th round in the series of HIV Estimations under National AIDS Control Programme (NACP). NACO undertakes HIV estimations biennially in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) – National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS). The first round of HIV estimation in India was done in 1998, while the last round was done in 2015.

- **Highlights of the report:** As per the report, in 2017, India had around 21.40 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV) with adult prevalence of 0.22%. Around 87.58 thousand new HIV infections and 69.11 thousand AIDS related deaths happened in 2017 while around 22,675 mothers needed Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV. HIV Estimations 2017 corroborate the previous rounds in terms of characteristic of the HIV epidemic in India i.e. national prevalence and incidence remains low, but the epidemic is high in some geographical regions and population group.

- **The rate of decline** in annual new HIV infections has been relatively slower in recent years. The report concludes that, overall, the impact of the programme has been significant with more than 80% decline in estimated new infection from peak of epidemic in 1995. Similarly, estimated AIDS related death declined by 71% since its peak in 2005.

- **Need for data on this:** The objective of HIV Estimations is to provide updated information on the status of HIV epidemic in India at national and State/UT level. Estimations of adult HIV prevalence, annual new infections (HIV incidence), AIDS-related mortality and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) needs are produced as outcomes of HIV estimations. The modelled estimates are needed because there is no direct reliable way of measuring these core indicators which are used to track the epidemic and monitor and evaluate the response in countries around the world.

- **Way ahead:** The report highlights the significant achievement of National AIDS response on prevention as well as on treatment front but has also indicated that there is no place for complacency as country move forward on ambitious goal of attaining the 'End of AIDS' by 2030.

- **About National AIDS Control Organization:** It is a division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that provides leadership to HIV/AIDS control programme in India through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies. In 1986, following the detection of the first AIDS case in the country, the National AIDS Committee was constituted in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

- **As the epidemic spread**, need was felt for a nationwide programme and an organization to steer the programme. In 1992 India's first National AIDS Control Programme (1992-1999) was launched, and National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) was constituted to implement the programme.

Government moves to stabilise rupee

- **Context:** The government has announced a plan to check "non-essential imports", boost exports and initiated five measures to attract dollar inflows into the country to trim the widening current account deficit that is seen as a factor behind the rupee's sharp slide against the dollar.

- **The five measures include:** Mandatory hedging conditions for infrastructure loans through the external commercial borrowing (ECB) route will be reviewed.

- **20 percent** exposure limits of foreign portfolio investors' corporate bond portfolio to a single corporate group, company and related entities will be removed, and 50 percent of any issue of corporate bonds will be reviewed. Manufacturing sector entities will be permitted to avail external commercial borrowings up to $50 million with a minimum maturity of one year instead of the earlier period of three years.

- **Masala Bond** issues done in the current financial year will be exempted from withholding tax. Restrictions on Indian banks' market making in Masala Bonds, including restrictions on underwriting of such bonds, will be removed.

- **Significance:** These five concrete steps announced would help increase inflows by $8-10 billion. The measures are essentially on the capital account side where the aim is to infuse more dollars into the economy through routes like ECBs, FPI, Masala Bonds etc. There is intent to put some curbs on imports and give a push to exports. There can be no debate that all these measures are positive for the rupee as they attack the fundamentals of demand and supply for dollars.

- **What necessitated this?** The pressure on rupee and the current account may not be a short-term phenomenon. That's because of rising interest rates in the US, high crude oil prices and its impact on emerging markets and the trade war between the US and China. Therefore, the government's intervention was necessary.

- **Will it help?** The measures announced by the government will work if the primary reason is weaker fundamentals. In case it is a global phenomenon, then it may not really help to correct the fall though it could cause some reversal in the first two or three sessions.

- **Also,** it should be remembered that what the government has announced will take time to work through. There will be a review by companies on the hedging requirements for infra loans from global markets. For this to work, it will take time for companies to take such decisions.

- **Why Indian Rupee is Falling Against the US Dollar?** Turkish currency turmoil: The Indian currency had plunged by Rs 1.08, or 1.57 per cent, to a record low of 69.91 against the US currency amid fears that Turkish currency turmoil could turn out into global financial crisis. The Spike in oil prices has pulled down the rupee, by pushing up dollar demand.

- **Global Trade war** fears triggered by the US and China's retaliatory import tariffs have also weakened the Rupee. The Chinese yuan has fallen sharply in the last few sessions. This also has triggered a dollar flight from many emerging economies. The Spurt in dollar outflow has pulled down most Asian currencies, including the rupee.

India's first indigenous anti-nuclear medical kit

- **The kit** has been developed for the armed, paramilitary and police forces only as they are the first ones likely to get exposed to radiation — be it during nuclear, chemical and biomedical (NCB) warfare or a rescue operation after a nuclear accident.

- **About the kit and its components:** The kit has over 25 items, including radio-protectors that provide 80-90% protection against radiation and nerve gas agents, bandages that absorb radiation as well as tablets and ointments. Developed in India for the first time, it's a potent alternative to similar kits that were till now being procured from strategically advanced nations such as the US and Russia at much higher prices.

- **The contents:** The contents include an advanced form of Prussian blue tablets, highly effective in incorporating Radio Cesium (Cs-137) and Radio Thallium, among the most feared radioisotopes in nuclear bombs that destroy human body cells.

- **The kit** also has an Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) injection that traps uranium in the guts and blood of victims during a nuclear accident or warfare. When EDTA is injected into the veins, it "grabs" heavy metals and minerals and removes them from the body.

- **The kit** also has Ca-EDTA Respiratory Fluid, which is the inhalation formula for chelation, or grabbing, of heavy metals and radioactive elements deposited in lungs through inhalation at nuclear accident sites.

- **The kit also has a radioactive** urine/biofluid collector which is cost-effective, easy to store and can safely dispose of the urine of a person affected by radiation. The collector has silk at its base, more than enough to jellify 500 millilitre of urine, which could be disposed of safely. The kit has anti-gamma ray skin ointment that protects and heals the radiation damage on the skin.

- **Also part of the kit is the amifostine injection**, a US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved conventional radiopharmaceutical that limits damage from gamma radiation. Another medicine in the form of a tablet is Indranil 150 mg. It is being introduced as a reserve emergency drug for services, rescue workers and places where high acute exposures are expected and lives will be at stake.

- **Significance of the kit:** During radioactive accidents thousands of patients may be rushed to hospitals. In several cases, if not most, they will also have traumatic, orthopaedic, surgical injuries or burns. The blood of such patients will have radioactive elements and will require wound dressing with significantly higher absorption capacity so that nothing leaks and infects others. Such highly absorptive dressings and gauze also make it safer for the medical staff to handle radioactive patients as the chance of their own contamination is reduced.

- **The kit is a potential alternative** to those being procured from nations such as the US and Russia at much higher prices. Such medicines will help everyone and not just soldiers. This will also help the victims affected in terrorist attacks.

Chiller Star Labelling Program

- **Highlights:** The Chiller Star Labelling Program has been formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). 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 31st December 2020.

- **This initiative** will promote advancement technology for central HVAC (Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems and will also facilitate energy efficient solutions for the large commercial and industrial applications.

- **What are Chillers?** Chillers are used extensively for space conditioning of buildings and for industrial process cooling applications. The size of Indian chiller market which stood at 1 Million Tonne per year at 2017, is projected to grow at a CAGR of 3.6% fuelled by a growth in the retail, hospitality and infrastructure projects.

- **Chillers,** being energy intensive system, contribute more than 40% of the total energy consumption in commercial buildings. Therefore, it is important to optimize energy performance of chillers and create awareness amongst the end users to adopt transition towards energy efficient chillers.

ICESat

- **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.

- **The satellite mission has four science objectives:** Measure melting ice sheets and investigate how this effects sea level rise. Measure and investigate changes in the mass of ice sheets and glaciers. Estimate and study sea ice thickness. Measure the height of vegetation in forests and other ecosystems worldwide.

- **How it works?** ATLAS will fire 10,000 times each second, sending hundreds of trillions of photons to the ground in six beams of green light. With so many photons returning from multiple beams, ICESat-2 will get a much more detailed view of the ice surface than its predecessor. As it circles Earth from pole to pole, ICESat-2 will measure ice heights along the same path in the polar regions four times a year, providing seasonal and annual monitoring of ice elevation changes. Beyond the poles, ICESat-2 will also measure the height of ocean and land surfaces, including forests.

- **Significance of the mission:** ICESat-2 will improve upon NASA's 15-year record of monitoring the change in polar ice heights. It started in 2003 with the first ICESat mission and continued in 2009 with NASA's Operation IceBridge, an airborne research campaign that kept track of the accelerating rate of change. The new observational technologies of ICESat-2 will advance the knowledge of how the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica contribute to sea level rise.

- **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.

- **In the Arctic**, the seasonal floes have also been in retreat. Sea-ice in the far north is thought to have lost two-thirds of its volume since the 1980s. And although this has no direct impact on the height of the oceans, the reduced ice-cover is working to amplify temperature rises in the region.

Hindi Diwas 2018:

- **Hindi Diwas 2018:** Context: National Hindi Divas or Hindi Day is observed every year on September 14 in India to promote Hindi as Matra Bhasha (mother tongue) of India. The day is a celebration of the Hindi language and its cultural heritage and values among the people of the country and abroad.

- **Why do we celebrate National Hindi Diwas?** The Constituent assembly of India adopted Hindi as the official language of the country on September 14, 1949 under Article 343.

- **It started** being observed as Hindi Day after stalwarts like Beohar Rajendra Simha, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Kaka Kalelkar, Maithili Sharan Gupt and Seth Govind Das lobbied hard for the cause.

- **Hindi language** is spoken by as many as 250 million people as the original language and it is the fourth language of the world.

EyeROV TUNA:

- **EyeROV TUNA:** Context: India's first underwater robotic drone EyeROV TUNA was recently handed over to Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Key facts: It has been designed and developed indigenously by Kochi-based start-up IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd (EyeROV).

- **It is smart micro-ROV** (Remotely Operated Vehicle) or underwater drone. This underwater drone will be used by NPOL for research and development activities which in turn would result in commercial product for defence purposes.

- **It is designed** to perform visual inspection and surveys of submerged structures up to depth of 100 metres.

- **It is also equipped to perform variety of functions**, including inspection of ship hulls, undersea cables or bridge moorings, fish farms, dams, port structure and bridge foundations and also in various underwater research operations. Its commercial use will eliminate need for costlier and riskier manual inspection by divers.

Nahargarh Biological Park:

- **Rajasthan's first lion** safari has been inaugurated at Nahargarh Biological Park. The park is located on Delhi-Jaipur National Highway in the Aravalli foothills, nearly 12 kilometers from state capital Jaipur.

- **Lions** in this park were brought from Junagarh, Gujarat under an exchange programme.

- **The park** will serve for breeding lions and also centre of attraction for tourists. It will provide new habitat to lions and also add tourism venue to the Pink City.

UPSC Fever

The Anemia Mukt Bharat

- **The Anemia Mukt Bharat**- intensified Iron-plus Initiative aims to strengthen the existing mechanisms and foster newer strategies for tackling anemia, focused on six target beneficiary groups, through six interventions and six institutional mechanisms; to achieve the envisaged target under the POSHAN Abhiyan.

- **The strategy focuses on testing** & treatment of anemia in school going adolescents & pregnant women using newer technologies, establishing institutional mechanisms for advanced research in anemia, and a comprehensive communication strategy including mass/mid media communication material. A web-portal anemiamuktbharat.info has also been developed as part of the monitoring mechanism of the strategy, which would provide survey data on anemia across beneficiary groups, target prevalence of anemia as per POSHAN Abhiyan and quarterly HMIS based reporting of programme implementation coverage upto the district level.

- **The Home-Based Care of Young Child (HBYC)** programme has an objective to reduce child mortality and morbidity by improving nutrition status, growth and early childhood development of young children through structured and focused home visits by ASHAs with the support of Anganwadi workers (AWWs).

- **The programme is envisaged** to be implemented as an extension to the existing HBNC programme and will be rolled out in a phased manner. In the first phase (F.Y 2018-19) the programme will be rolled out in all the identified Aspirational Districts. In the second phase, all the remaining districts under Poshan Abhiyan will be included and in the third phase programme this shall be expanded to cover all the districts in the country. Under the HBYC programme, five additional home visits (in every three months) by ASHAs are proposed after the last visit on 42nd day, as in the existing HBNC programme. Thus, the contact of new-born with the health system is extended till 2nd year of birth.

- **ASHA will ensure exclusive breastfeeding** till 6 months of life, adequate complementary feeding after 6 months, Iron and Folic Acid supplementation, full immunization of children, regular growth monitoring, appropriate use of ORS, appropriate hand washing practices and age appropriate playing and communication for children during each home visit.

Mr Ahluwalia launches C-DAC Information Media Server (CIMS)

- **Shri S.S. Ahluwalia,** Hon'ble Minister of State for Electronics and IT launches C-DAC Information Media Server (CIMS) for enhancing Good Governance.

- **C-DAC Information Media** Server is a dedicated computer appliance having specialized application software to provide audio and video on demand. This low-cost affordable system is built with single board computer having powerful and energy efficient multi-core processor. It does not require any special purpose internet service provider or data connectivity. The common feature includes displaying text, images for viewing, video streaming, e-brochure; for viewing or downloading for offline reference .

- **Shri Ahluwalia said** "Our Government is focussed towards providing Good Governance to every citizen of our country and has a dream of making them full aware with the various governmental schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Atal pension Yojana (APY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Soil Health Card Scheme, Digital India, Skill India Program, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), One Rank One Pension Scheme through this system that will be available on all types of electronic and mobile platform.

Shri Piyush Goyal inaugurates the first ever India tourism Mart 2018

- **Tourism sector can change the destiny of India: Shri Piyush Goyal** India is among the fastest growing tourist destinations in the world: Shri K J Alphons

- **The Union Minister for Railways and Coal**, Shri Piyush Goyal inaugurated the 'first ever' India Tourism Mart (ITM 2018) in the presence of Union Tourism Minister, Shri K J Alphons and the Tourism Minister of Morocco, Mr. Mohamed Sajid, in New Delhi today. The India Tourism Mart is being organized by the Ministry of Tourism from 16th to 18th September 2018, in partnership with the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) and with support of State /UT Governments. The function was held in presence of the Secretary, other senior officials of Tourism Ministry and Chairman/members of FAITH and also delegates from India and across the world.

- **Inaugurating the event**, Shri Piyush Goyal wished the best to the Tourism Ministry to reach the ambitious goal of US$100 billion FTA receipts/year within 5 years. The Minister said that unless the infrastructure/fundamentals are set up, India can't come up as a well sought after destination and he said that the present government has been developing these like ensuring 24 hour power supply, promoting renewable energy forms, and improving connectivity by effectively connecting the remotest destinations.

- **The Minister also added that the most important element** that will help promote Tourism in a complete way is the Government's cleanliness drive, the Swachhta Abhiyan, which will ensure India becoming a preferred destination for all international tourists. Mentioning the income multiplier effect in the Tourism sector, the Minister said that Tourism generates a number of employment opportunities in formal and informal sectors and can change the destiny of the country. The Railway Minister added that the youth of the country can be entrepreneurs, service providers, interpreters etc in the sector and ascertained that India with its varied features has tremendous potential and we just need to leverage from it.

- **Speaking at the event**, the Tourism Minister announced that ITM will be an annual event hereafter in line with other International Tourism Marts and it will be held in the month of September. The Minister said that India is so vast that there will be something new for everyone to see and experience in this country with its varied geography, culture, traditions, architectural marvels, religions. Shri Alphons also added that visiting the country has become easier with the new e-visa regime which is now open to 166 countries.

- **India Tourism Mart (ITM)** is being held for the first time and the Tourism industry stakeholders are coming together for such a large scale event with Ministry's support. FAITH is the apex organization of all the important trade and hospitality associations of the country with all the 10 major Tourist organizations like FHRAI, HAI, IATO being involved in this mega event and India Convention Promotion Board (ICPB) is coordinating the whole event. This is a Business to Business Event. The objective of the event is to create an annual Global Tourism Mart for India in line with major international travel marts being held in countries across the world. The Mart provides a platform for all stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industries to interact and transact business opportunities.

- **The ITM 2018** has a participation of around 225 hosted international buyers and Media personnel across the world such as North America, West Europe, East Asia, Latin America, CIS countries etc. The international delegates from overseas markets will interact with Indian seller delegates and the buyers will include current buyers who are already marketing India as a tourist destination as well as potential buyers who are not marketing India as a tourist destination at present but have shown interest in the country.

- **The event also provides** an opportunity to the buyers to see the world class tourism facilities available in our country such as Airports, Hotels, Tourist destinations, upcoming facilities, MICE facilities, possibility in the field of adventure tourism and other niche products.

- **Around 225 stalls have been provided** to the sellers to enable them to interact with the buyers. These include pavilion for States & Union Territories to showcase their unique tourism destinations and products. The B2B meetings between buyer and seller delegates are being held during these 3 days.

- **The FAITH and State Governments** is also offering a pre and post event FAM trips (Familiarization trips) for the buyer delegates from overseas.

Opening Ceremony: Indo-US Joint Military Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018

- **Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018** a joint military exercise of Indian and US armies, commenced this morning at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand with a short yet impressive opening ceremony that saw the unfurling of the national flags of both countries to the strains of "Jana Gana Mana" and "The Star Spangled Banner". Indian and US soldiers stood side by side, and gave a ceremonial salute to the two senior most officers of the US and Indian side reviewing the ceremony.

UPSC=Fever

Swachchta hi Sewa: New Health Ministry initiative with private hospitals

- **NABH to adopt Kayakalp parameters of hygiene and cleanliness** Encouraged by the achievements of Kayakalp Scheme, National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) has decided to consider assessment of healthcare facilities in the private sector on the lines of parameters of Kayakalp Scheme.

- **This is also an initiative** as part of the Swachchta hi Sewa cleanliness and sanitation campaign being undertaken across various parts of the country.

- **Cleanliness and hygiene** in hospitals besides being critical for preventing infections also provide the patients and visitors with a positive experience and encourages moulding behaviour related to cleanliness and sanitation at their homes and work-place.

- **Clean & bright environment** where patients are received with dignity & respect, along with delivery of prompt care go a long way in promoting faster healing and enhanced satisfaction of patients. To complement this effort, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India has launched "Kayakalp" in the year 2015 with initiative to recognise such efforts under 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan'.

- **With above initiative of the Government**, the Healthcare Facilities in the Public sector have been competing with each other to attain highest levels of cleanliness and hygiene in their respective facilities.

- **The initiative** has resulted in bringing significant improvement in the sanitation and hygiene, patient satisfaction, behavioural change in the staff & employees of the Hospitals/Institutions, patients and their attendants towards cleanliness.

- **Public perception towards cleanliness & hygiene** in public healthcare facilities has also been changing.

- **Besides,** public healthcare facilities have also given focused attention on promoting activities like Green Initiatives to reduce carbon footprint by encouraging Public Sector Hospitals to undertake Energy Conservation, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, horticulture & landscaping, optimal skill based training of sanitation employees and capacity building, celebration of Swachhta Pakhwada, Swachhta hi Sewa Campaign across all the public sector health care facilities every year.

- **The Health Ministry** will recognise the outstanding work done by the private hospitals on an annual basis.

Swachhata Hi Seva' movement

- **Context:**chhata Hi Seva' movement has been launched across the country on September 15, 2018.

- **Aim:** Over the next two weeks leading to October 2 – Gandhi Jayanti – the Swachhata Hi Seva movement aims to ensure a high standard of cleanliness across the country, which was Mahatma Gandhi's dream for the nation.

- **Significance of the campaign:** The campaign for a Swachh Bharat or clean India, which began four years ago, was made into a nation-wide movement today. October 2, 2018 will mark the beginning of the 150th year of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, and the government plans to realise his dream of a clean India.

- **About the campaign:** The campaign is being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening Ministry for the Swachh Bharat Mission. The objective of the campaign is to mobilise people and reinforce the "Jan Aandolan" for sanitation to contribute to Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a Clean India.

- **It will see large scale** mobilisation of people from all walks of life to undertake shramdaan for cleanliness and construction of toilets and to make their environments free from open defecation. There will be targeted cleaning of public and tourist places. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has made elaborate plans along with the State Governments to involve people from various walks of life and make this an unprecedented people's campaign. Reaching out to the poor and marginalised and providing them with sustainable sanitation services would be the hallmark of this campaign.

- **Background:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a campaign which was launched on 2 October 2014, and aims to eradicate open defecation by 2019, and is a national campaign, covering 4,041 statutory cities and towns. Its predecessors were the "Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan" and before that the "Total Sanitation Campaign". The mission was divided into two parts — urban and rural.

Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

- **Context:** Noting that ☐12,000 crore of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds remains unspent, the Central Information Commission (CIC) has asked the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman to come out with a legal framework to ensure its transparency and hold parliamentarians and political parties accountable for their obligations under the scheme.

- **Need for legal framework:** MoSPI report showed that in February 2018, funds allotted to MPLADS but unspent stood at ☐4,773.13 crore, while 2,920 instalments of ☐2.5 crore were yet to be released. That resulted in a total backlog of ☐12,073.13 crore.

- **Structure of the proposed framework:** The framework should make transparency a legal obligation, with all MPs and parties required to present the public and Parliament with a comprehensive report on the number of applications received for their constituency, works recommended, works rejected with reasons, progress of works and details of beneficiaries.

- **Liabilities** for any breach of duties should also be imposed. Further, the framework should prohibit and prevent MPs using the funds for their private works, or diverting them to private trusts or to their own relatives. District administrations must provide regular information — work-wise, MP-wise, and year-wise details on progress — which are to be compiled by the MoSPI and made available to the public.

- **About MPLAD scheme:** What is it? It was launched in December, 1993, to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.

- **Works under the scheme:** Works, developmental in nature, based on locally felt needs and always available for the use of the public at large, are eligible under the scheme. Preference under the scheme is given to works relating to national priorities, such as provision of drinking water, public health, education, sanitation, roads, etc.

- **Funds:** Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities. The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsablee. The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.

- **Execution of works:** The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government. The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.

- **Recommendation of works:** The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies. The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer

- **Context:** The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer (or World Ozone Day) is observed every year on September 16 for the preservation of the Ozone Layer. 2018 Theme: 'Keep Cool and Carry On: The Montreal Protocol'.

- **Significance of the day:** In 1994, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 16 September the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

- **What you need to know about the Ozone layer?** The ozone layer absorbs most of the Sun's ultraviolet light which is harmful to human life and other life forms. The layer absorbs about 97 to 99% of ultraviolet rays and maintain the ozone-oxygen cycle. Dobson unit is a unit which is used to measure the ozone in the atmosphere at a standard temperature and pressure.

- **Montreal protocol:** The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was designed to reduce the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances in order to reduce their abundance in the atmosphere, and thereby protect the earth's fragile ozone Layer. The original Montreal Protocol was agreed on 16 September 1987 and entered into force on 1 January 1989.

- **The Montreal Protocol** includes a unique adjustment provision that enables the Parties to the Protocol to respond quickly to new scientific information and agree to accelerate the reductions required on chemicals already covered by the Protocol. These adjustments are then automatically applicable to all countries that ratified the Protocol.

- **Montreal Protocol** stipulates that the production and consumption of compounds that deplete ozone in the stratosphere-chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform-are to be phased out by 2000 (2005 for methyl chloroform). These compounds significantly deplete the stratospheric ozone layer that shields the planet from damaging UV-B radiation.

- **Background:** The phaseout of controlled uses of ozone depleting substances and the related reductions have not only helped protect the ozone layer for this and future generations, but have also contributed significantly to global efforts to address climate change; furthermore, it has protected human health and ecosystems by limiting the harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth.

Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)

- **Context:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently conducted first successful trials of indigenously developed third generation Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM).

- **About MPATGM:** The MPATGM is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM), which has been under development by DRDO in partnership with Indian defense contractor VEM Technologies Ltd. since 2015. Fitted with a high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead, the MPATGM reportedly boasts a top attack capability and has a maximum engagement range of about 2.5 kilometers.

- **The demand:** The Indian Army needs over 40,000 missiles for its infantry and mechanised units. While it has rejected the US-built Javelin system, a formal decision on the procurement on the Israeli SPIKE system is awaited.

ISRO launches two U.K. satellites

- **Context:** ISROs PSLV-C42 lifted off for the launch of two satellites from the United Kingdom – NovaSAR and S1-4 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre. The two satellites, owned by Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL) were placed in a circular orbit around the poles, 583 km from Earth.

- **The commercial arm of ISRO**, Antrix Corporation earned more than □220 crore on this launch. This would be the 44th flight of the PSLV and the third launch by ISRO this year. The PSLV-C-42 is the lightest version of the PSLV flying in its core-alone version without the six strap-on motors.

- **Key facts:** The NovaSAR is a technology demonstration mission designed to test the capabilities of a new low cost S-band SAR platform. It will be used for ship detection and maritime monitoring and also flood monitoring, besides agricultural and forestry applications. The S1-4 is a high-resolution Optical Earth Observation Satellite, used for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and for disaster monitoring.

CPCB report on river pollution

- **Context:** The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has released a report on the extent of pollution in rivers in India.

- **Background:** Based on the recommendations of the National Green Tribunal, the CPCB last month apprised the States of the extent of pollution in their rivers.

- **Key findings:** Increase in numbers: The number of polluted stretches of the country's rivers has increased to 351 from 302 two years ago, and the number of critically polluted stretches — where water quality indicators are the poorest — has gone up to 45 from 34.

- **Several of the river's stretches** — in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — are actually far less polluted than many rivers in Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat. These three States account for 117 of the 351 polluted river stretches. The most significant stretches of pollution highlighted by the CPCB assessment include the Mithi river — from Powai to Dharavi — with a BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) of 250 mg/l; the Godavari — from Someshwar to Rahed — with a BOD of 5.0-80 mg/l; the Sabarmati — Kheroj to Vautha — with a BOD of 4.0-147 mg/l; and the Hindon — Saharanpur to Ghaziabad — with a BOD of 48-120 mg/l.

- **Background:** The CPCB, since the 1990s, has a programme to monitor the quality of rivers primarily by measuring BOD, which is a proxy for organic pollution — the higher it is, the worse the river. The health of a river and the efficacy of water treatment measures by the States and municipal bodies are classified depending on BOD, with a BOD greater than or equal to 30 mg/l termed 'priority 1,' while that between 3.1-6 mg/l is 'priority 5.' The CPCB considers a BOD less than 3 mg/l an indicator of a healthy river.

- **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):** Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), statutory organisation, was constituted in September, 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

- **Functions:** To promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution. To improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

- **Biochemical oxygen demand (Bod):** Biochemical oxygen demand is the amount of oxygen required for microbial metabolism of organic compounds in water. BOD value is most commonly expressed in milligrams of oxygen consumed per litre of sample during 5 days of incubation at 20 °C. BOD can be used as a gauge of the effectiveness of wastewater treatment plants.

Paryatan Parv:

- **Context:** The second edition of 'Paryatan Parv' of the Ministry of Tourism has begun across the country.

- **What is Paryatan Parv?** The Paryatan Parv will showcase the cultural diversity of the country, with cultural performances, crafts bazaar, food court showcasing folk and classical dance & music, handicrafts & handlooms and cuisine from all regions and States of the country.

- **The Ministry of Tourism**, in collaboration with other Central Ministries, State Governments and Stakeholders is organizing "Paryatan Parv" across the country.

- **The programme** is being organized with the objective of drawing focus on the benefits of tourism, showcasing the cultural diversity of the country and reinforcing the principle of "Tourism for All".

Pacific Asia Travel Association gold awards:

- **Kerala Tourism** has won two prestigious gold awards of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for its innovative marketing campaigns.

- **These awards** were won by Kerala Tourism's Yalla Kerala print campaign and Live Inspired Posters under PATA's Travel Advertisement Print and Travel Poster categories respectively.

- **Both campaign** and posters were developed and designed by Stark Communications which is advertising agency of Kerala Tourism. About PATA awards: These awards are given by PATA and are sponsored by Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

- **The Awards are presented** to outstanding entries in four principal categories: Marketing; Education and Training; Environment, and Heritage and Culture. These awards are presented every year in recognition of the achievements of 25 separate organisations and individuals.

Jharkhand government introduces electric cars for official use:

- **The state government** of Jharkhand has introduced electric vehicles for official use. With the development, Jharkhand has become the fifth state of India and the first state in eastern India to procure the eco-friendly vehicles for government use.

Medical Cyclotron Facility Cyclone-30

- **Medical Cyclotron Facility Cyclone-30** Became Operational at Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC), Kolkata

- **Cyclotrons** are used to produce radioisotopes for diagnostic and therapeutic use for cancer care. Cyclone-30, the biggest cyclotron in India for medical application became operational this month when 30 MeV beam reached the Faraday Cup for the first time last week. Subsequently, beam from this facility was used to produce 18F (Fluorine-18 isotope) for the preparation of [18 F]Fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG), a radio-pharmaceutical used by Board of Radiation & Isotope Technology (BRIT).

- **The facility** will start regular production by the middle of the next year after the commissioning of the supporting nuclear systems and regulatory clearances. Cyclone-30 facility at VECC, Kolkata, a Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) unit, will have many unique features, under various stages of implementation, which are first of its kind in many ways.

- **After the commissioning** of liquid target (for FDG production) and solid targets (production of Germanium-68, Palladium-103 and other isotopes), work on studies related to installation of Iodine isotope [1-123] production target, material study target and Accelerator Driven System target will also be taken up.

- **This facility** will provide for affordable radio isotopes and related radiopharmaceuticals for the entire country especially, for Eastern India and also have export potential for Germanium-68/Gallium-68 generator for in-situ production of Gallium-68 and Palladium-103 isotopes, used for breast cancer diagnosis and prostate cancer treatment, respectively.

- **Cyclone-30 commissioning** re-emphasises the capability of Indian scientists and engineers to deliver at the highest level of science and technology.

Govt proposes to merge Dena Bank, Vijaya Bank and Bank of Baroda

- **Context:** The Centre has proposed the amalgamation of state-owned Bank of Baroda, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank to create India's third largest bank as parts of reforms in the public sector banking segment. The proposal will now need the approval of the boards of these individual banks. The banks' boards will shortly meet and take up the decision.

- **Background:** The merger of these three state-owned banks is a part of the government's agenda of consolidation of public sector banks. The consolidation was proposed by the Alternative Mechanism. The Union Cabinet in August 2017 approved amalgamation of Public Sector Banks through Alternative Mechanism (AM) with an aim to facilitate consolidation among the Nationalised Banks to create strong and competitive banks.

- **Why merger is good?** The merger benefits include getting economies of scale and reduction in the cost of doing business. Technical inefficiency is one of the main factors responsible for banking crisis. The scale of inefficiency is more in case of small banks. Hence, merger would be good. Mergers help small banks to gear up to international standards with innovative products and services with the accepted level of efficiency. Mergers help many PSBs, which are geographically concentrated, to expand their coverage beyond their outreach.

- **A better and optimum size** of the organization would help PSBs offer more and more products and services and help in integrated growth of the sector. The size of each business entity after merger is expected to add strength to the Indian Banking System in general and Public Sector Banks in particular. This will also end the unhealthy and intense competition going on even among public sector banks as of now. In the global market, the Indian banks will gain greater recognition and higher rating.

- **The volume of inter-bank** transactions will come down, resulting in saving of considerable time in clearing and reconciliation of accounts. The burden on the central government to recapitalize the public sector banks again and again will come down substantially. This will also help in meeting more stringent norms under BASEL III, especially capital adequacy ratio.

- **A great number of posts of CMD, ED, GM** and Zonal Managers will be abolished, resulting in savings of crores of Rupee. This will also reduce unnecessary interference by board members in day to day affairs of the banks. After mergers, bargaining strength of bank staff will become more and visible. Bank staff may look forward to better wages and service conditions in future. The wide disparities between the staff of various banks in their service conditions and monetary benefits will narrow down. Customers will have access to fewer banks offering them wider range of products at a lower cost. From regulatory perspective, monitoring and control of less number of banks will be easier after mergers. This is at the macro level.

- **Concerns associated with merger:** Immediate negative impact would be from pension liability provisions (due to different employee benefit structures) and harmonisation of accounting policies for bad loans recognition. There are many problems to adjust top leadership in institutions and the unions. Mergers will result in shifting/closure of many ATMs, Branches and controlling offices, as it is not prudent and economical to keep so many banks concentrated in several pockets, notably in urban and metropolitan centres.

- **Mergers will result** in immediate job losses on account of large number of people taking VRS on one side and slow down or stoppage of further recruitment on the other. This will worsen the unemployment situation further and may create law and order problems and social disturbances. The weaknesses of the small banks may get transferred to the bigger bank also. New power centres will emerge in the changed environment. Mergers will result in clash of different organizational cultures. Conflicts will arise in the area of systems and processes too.

- **When a big bank books huge loss or crumbles**, there will be a big jolt in the entire banking industry. Its repercussions will be felt everywhere. Also, India right now needs more banking competition rather than more banking consolidation. In other words, it needs more banks rather than fewer banks. This does not mean that there should be a fetish about small-scale lending operations, but to know that large banks are not necessarily better banks.

- **Way ahead:** Merger is a good idea. However, this should be carried out with right banks for the right reasons. Merger is also tricky given the huge challenges banks face, including the bad loan problem that has plunged many public sector banks in an unprecedented crisis. Since mergers are also about people, a huge amount of planning would be required to make the consolidation process smoother. Piecemeal consolidation will not provide a lasting solution and what is required is an integrated approach from all stakeholders including the government.

Policy on 'jhum' cultivation

- **Context:** A recent NITI Aayog report has recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture should take up a "mission on jhum cultivation" to ensure inter-ministerial convergence.

- **Need of the hour:** Various authorities often have divergent approaches towards shifting cultivation. This creates confusion among grass-roots level workers and jhum farmers said the report. Therefore, shifting cultivation fallows must be legally perceived and categorised as 'regenerating fallows' and credit facilities must be extended to those who practise shifting cultivation. Land for shifting cultivation should be recognised as "agricultural land" where farmers practise agro-forestry for the production of food rather than as forestland.

- **What is Jhum cultivation?** Jhum cultivation, also known as the slash and burn agriculture, is the process of growing crops by first clearing the land of trees and vegetation and burning them thereafter. The burnt soil contains potash which increases the nutrient content of the soil. This practice is considered as an important mainstay of food production for a considerable population in North-East India.

- **Issues with Jhum Cultivation:** The report notes that between 2000 and 2010, the land under shifting cultivation dropped by 70 %. People are returning to fallow land left after shifting in a shorter span. Earlier the cultivators returned to fallows after 10-12 years, now they are returning in three to five years which has impacted on the quality of the soil.

Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering

- **Context:** Almost three months after Pakistan was placed on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list for failing to curb terror funding, Pakistan's recent action against terror financing, particularly on the "legal" front, was found to be "unsatisfactory", according to a review by the Asia Pacific Policy Group (APPG).

- **Reasons for the poor performance:** Not much has been achieved by Pakistan, especially on the legal side (like freezing of assets, attachment of funds, militant groups infrastructures etc).

- **What next?** Another review for Pakistan will be held in December this year following which a final evaluation report will be prepared. For Pakistan, the first deadline is January 2019 failing which they may face more heat. By then, Pakistan will have to publish updated lists of persons and entities proscribed under the Anti-Terrorism Act and the UN-designated entities.

- **About APG:** It is the FATF-style regional body for the Asia-Pacific region. It is an inter-governmental organisation founded in 1997 in Bangkok, Thailand.

- **Composition:** The APG consists of 41 member jurisdictions and a number of observer jurisdictions and international/regional observer organisations. Under the APG's Terms of Reference (updated 2012) membership is available for jurisdictions with a presence in the Asia-Pacific region who commit to the policy objectives of the organisation including undergoing a mutual evaluation (peer review) to determine the level of compliance of the member with the international standards against money laundering and terrorist financing.

- **Observer status** is available to any jurisdiction in the Asia-Pacific region interested in becoming a member or any other jurisdiction which supports the goals and work of the APG. International organisations which support the work of the APG may also join as supporting observers.

- **Role of members:** Jurisdictions that join the APG, either as members or as observers, must commit to implement the international standards against money laundering, the financing of terrorism and proliferation financing (WMD), in particular the Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). These standards were substantially updated in 2012 and are supplemented by a complex assessment methodology in 2013 which forms the benchmark for mutual evaluations.

- **The APG has five primary functions:** Mutual evaluations: The APG assesses the levels of compliance by its member jurisdictions with the global AML/CFT standards through a mutual evaluation (peer review) programme;

- **Technical assistance and training:** The APG Secretariat coordinates bi-lateral and donor-agency technical assistance and training in the Asia/Pacific region for its member jurisdictions in order to improve compliance with the global standards;

- **Typologies research:** Research and analysis into money laundering and terrorist financing methods and trends is a key function of the APG to assist policy and law makers as well as law enforcement agencies and the general public to identify and respond to new and emerging trends, methods, risks and vulnerabilities;

- **Global engagement:** The APG contributes to international AML/CFT policy development and actively engages with the global network of FSRBs. The APG also participates in a number of FATF working groups and in its plenary meetings; and

- **Private sector engagement:** Private sector engagment is critical to the APG's overall objectives. The APG actively engages with financial and non-financial institutions, NPOs, training centres and universities in the Asia-Pacific to better inform the general public and specialists about global issues relating to money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing.

India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)

- **Context:** MoEFCC has released the draft India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP). ICAP has been prepared by the ministry after extensive deliberations and multi-stakeholders engagement in public domain for receiving comments.

- **Significance:** India is the first country in world to develop such a document (ICAP), which addresses cooling requirement across sectors and lists out actions which can help reduce the cooling demand. The overarching goal is to provide sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all while securing environmental and socio-economic benefits for the society.

- **The goals emerging from the suggested interventions stated in ICAP are:** Reduction of cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25 % by year 2037-38. Reduction of refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by year 2037-38. Reduction of cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by year 2037-38. Training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by the year 2022-23, in synergy with Skill India Mission.

- **The broad objectives of the India Cooling Action Plan include:** Assessment of cooling requirements across sectors in next 20 years and the associated refrigerant demand and energy use. Map the technologies available to cater the cooling requirement including passive interventions, refrigerant-based technologies and alternative technologies such as not-in-kind technologies.

- **Suggest interventions** in each sector to provide for sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all. Focus on skilling of RAC service technicians. Develop an R&D innovation ecosystem for indigenous development of alternative technologies.

'Smart fence' pilot project

- **Context:** India's first 'smart fence' pilot project has been launched along the India-Pakistan International Border in Ploura, Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Key facts:** The pilot project involves deploying of laser-activated fences and technology-enabled barriers to plug vulnerable gaps along the frontiers. The smart fencing uses a number of devices for surveillance, communication and data storage.

- **The innovative system** provides for round-the-clock surveillance on the border, even in different weather conditions be it dust storm, fog or rain. It also reportedly comprises automated surveillance technology and alarm detection systems.

- **Significance:** The smart fence pilot project is expected to be a massive boon for monitoring security situations in border areas. It is a technological solution devised to make the security system at the borders more strong and effective. The system will virtually make it impossible for terrorists to infiltrate into the Indian side of the border.

World's first hydrogen train:

- **Germany** has rolled out the world's first hydrogen-powered train, signalling the start of a push to challenge the might of polluting diesel trains with costlier but eco-friendly technology.

- **How they operate?** Hydrogen trains are equipped with fuel cells that produce electricity through a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, a process that leaves steam and water as the only emissions. Excess energy is stored in ion lithium batteries on board the train.

Maharashtra to set up cyber varsity:

- **The Maharashtra Government** has taken the first step towards setting up a varsity dedicated to mitigating cyber threats. It has set aside ☐80 crore for the first round of its funding and the proposal for the project will be tabled in the State cabinet's consideration in the first week of October.

- **Role and functions:** The new Cyber University will train 3,000 professionals to fight online space cyber attacks, internet crimes, and conduct cyber forensics. It will also impart training in 15 other Internet of Things (IoT) areas such as Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

- **The varsity** will provide for and prepare internet professionals on the lines of the Microsoft Certified Professional Program. The courses will cost less than ☐5 lakh for courses in data analytics, cloud computing, blockchain, AI, cyber forensics and cyber investigations.

Union Home Secretary launches 'e-Sahaj' portal for grant of Security Clearance

- **"Pendency has sharply come down": Shri Rajiv Gauba**

- **The Union Home Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba** launched an online 'e-Sahaj' portal here today for grant of Security Clearance. The portal will facilitate an applicant to submit application online and also to view the status of his application from time to time.

- **Speaking on the occasion, the Union Home Secretary** said that with the introduction of online portal, the process has become standardized, resulting in a process which will be faster, transparent and easy to monitor. Various functionaries can access the application and documents online and take timely decisions.

- **Shri Gauba said the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has recently streamlined the Security Clearance procedures and issued a fresh set of guidelines. A Committee of Officers meets every week in MHA for timely decision on security clearance proposals.

- **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.

- **MHA is the nodal Ministry** for security clearances in certain sensitive sectors before issue of licence/permit, permission, contract etc, to companies/ bidders/individuals by the administrative Ministry. The objective of national security clearance is to evaluate potential security threats, including economic threats, and provide risk assessment before clearing investment and project proposals in key sectors. The aim is to strike a healthy balance between meeting the imperatives of national security and facilitating ease of doing business and promoting investment in the country.

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

- **Context:** DAC has approved Procurement of Equipment Worth Rs 9,100 Crores.

- **DAC has approved procurement of- Akash Missile systems and IUWBA:** Akash Missile Systems: The Missile to be procured is an upgraded version of the previously inducted Akash missiles and will include seeker technology, possess 360 degree coverage and will be of compact configuration with reduced signature. The upgraded Akash Weapon System is operationally critical equipment which will provide protection to vital assets.

- **The DAC** also accorded approval for progressing Design and Development of Individual Under Water Breathing Apparatus (IUWBA) for T 90 Tanks. Developed by DRDO Lab DEBEL, the IUWBA is used by the crew of Tanks as a safety gear and is required by the Tank crew for emergency escape when negotiating water obstacles while deep fording.

- **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):** What is it? To counter corruption and speed up decision- making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated DAC. It is headed by the Defence Minister.

- **Objective:** The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

- **Functions:** The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans. It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

Southern Zonal Council

- **Context:** The 28th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council was recently held under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh in Bengaluru.

- **The Council** reviewed the progress of the implementation of the recommendations made at the last meeting relating to security to fishermen, introduction of peninsular tourism trains, uniformity in allocation of funds in proportion to population of SC/ST for scholarship for all the courses etc.

- **What are zonal councils?** Zonal councils have been established by the Parliament to promote interstate cooperation and coordination. They are statutory bodies established under the States Reorganisation Act 1956 and not constitutional bodies. They are only deliberative and advisory bodies.

- **There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:** The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh. The Central Zonal Council, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal. The Western Zonal Council, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Southern Zonal Council is composed of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

- **Composition:** Chairman – The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils. Vice Chairman – The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time. Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone. Advisers- One person nominated by the Planning Commission (which has been replaced by NITI Ayog now) for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone. Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.

- **The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are:** Bringing out national integration. Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies. Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences. Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

- **Facts for Prelims:** The North Eastern States i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya (vii) Sikkim and (viii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- **Context:** The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has announced that it will establish its South Asia Area Office and Technology Innovation Centre at New Delhi.

- **About International Telecommunication Union (ITU):** The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is an agency of the United Nations (UN) whose purpose is to coordinate telecommunication operations and services throughout the world. Originally founded in 1865, as the International Telegraph Union, the ITU is the oldest existing international organization. ITU headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

- **The ITU consists of three sectors:** Radiocommunication (ITU-R) — ensures optimal, fair and rational use of the radio frequency (RF) spectrum. Telecommunication Standardization (ITU-T) — formulates recommendations for standardizing telecommunication operations worldwide. Telecommunication Development (ITU-D) — assists countries in developing and maintaining internal communication operations.

- **Membership:** There are 193 Member States of the ITU, including all UN member states except the Republic of Palau, plus the Vatican City. Membership of ITU is open to only UN members, which may join the Union as Member States, as well as to private organizations like carriers, equipment manufacturers, funding bodies, research and development organizations and international and regional telecommunication organizations, which may join ITU as non-voting Sector Members.

- **Functions:** The ITU sets and publishes regulations and standards relevant to electronic communication and broadcasting technologies of all kinds including radio, television, satellite, telephone and the Internet. The organization conducts working parties, study groups and meetings to address current and future issues and to resolve disputes.

- **The ITU organizes** and holds an exhibition and forum known as the Global TELECOM every four years. Another important aspect of the ITU's mandate is helping emerging countries to establish and develop telecommunication systems of their own. Although the recommendations of the ITU are non-binding, most countries adhere to them in the interest of maintaining an effective international electronic communication environment.

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

- **Context: 7th UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism is being held in Seoul, capital of South Korea.** Theme: 'A 2030 Vision for Urban Tourism'.

- **Organized by:** World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Seoul Metropolitan Government and supported by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of South Korea and Seoul Tourism Organization.

- **Significance:** The summit provides unique platform to discuss key issues shaping future of urban tourism in the context of the 2030 Urban Agenda. It brings together high-level representatives from National Tourism Administrations, city authorities and related stakeholders, serving as platform to exchange experiences and expertise.

- **About UNWTO: What is it?** The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

- **Members:** UNWTO's membership includes 158 countries, 6 Associate Members and over 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

- **What it does?** As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. UNWTO encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.

- **UNWTO** generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY)

- **Context:** Government has modified operational guidelines for Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY). The new operational guidelines come at the onset of the rabi season, which starts from 1st of October.

- **Modified guidelines:** Provision of penalties for States and Insurance Companies for the delay in settlement of insurance claims has been incorporated. There is a Standard Operating Procedure for evaluation of insurance companies and remove them from the scheme if found ineffective in providing services. The Government has also decided to include perennial horticultural crops under the ambit of PMFBY on a pilot basis. The scheme, as per the new operational guidelines provides add on coverage for crop loss due to attack of wild animals, which will be implemented on a pilot basis.

- **Aadhaar** number will be mandatorily captured to avoid duplication of beneficiaries. The insurance companies are given a target of enrolling 10% more non-loanee farmers than the previous corresponding season. The insurance companies will have to mandatorily spend 0.5% of gross premium per company per season for publicity and awareness of the scheme.

- **Significance:** The new operational guidelines address the current challenges faced while implementing the scheme by putting forth effective solutions. The much demanded rationalization of premium release process has been incorporated in the new guidelines. As per this, the insurance companies need not provide any projections for the advance subsidy.

- **About PMFBY:** In April, 2016, the government of India had launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) after rolling back the earlier insurance schemes viz. National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), Weather-based Crop Insurance scheme and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).

- **Premium:** It envisages a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for Kharif crops, and 1.5% for Rabi crops. The premium for annual commercial and horticultural crops will be 5%. The scheme is mandatory for farmers who have taken institutional loans from banks. It's optional for farmers who have not taken institutional credit.

- **Objectives:** Providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events. Stabilizing the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming. Encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices. Ensuring flow of credit to the agriculture sector which contributes to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness of agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.

The case for making Pluto a planet again

- **Context:** Scientists are arguing that denying Pluto planetary status is invalid and erroneous. A team of scientists is indicating that the basis on which Pluto was rejected as a planet does not have any support in research literature.

- **Background:** When Pluto was discovered in 1930, it was the ninth planet in the solar system based on an overestimation of its size. However, Pluto seemed to look out of place among the other larger planets after the discovery of swarms of ice dwarfs – icy rocks in the Kuiper Belt, at the very edge of the solar system billions of miles from the sun. Due to this, some astronomers suggested that Pluto could be just another Kuiper Belt Object (KBO) and not a planet.

- **How is a planet defined?** In 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) laid out some guidelines for a celestial body to be called a planet. The IAU said that there were three conditions that must be fulfilled for a celestial body to be termed as a planet: 1) it must be round; 2) it must orbit the sun; and 3) it must have "cleared the neighbourhood" of its orbit.

- **Why was Pluto rejected?** According to the IAU's definition, Pluto does not meet the criteria, as Neptune's gravity influences it, and Pluto shares its orbit with frozen gases and objects in the Kuiper belt.

- **Pluto downgraded to "dwarf planet":** After several years of intense debate, astronomers finally reached a consensus in August 2006. They decided to demote Pluto in an extreme redefinition of planethood that seemed to favour scientific reasoning over historic and cultural influences. The decision meant that Pluto will not be a planet anymore.

- **Pluto stood** apart from the other discovered planets. Not only because of its small size, but because its elongated orbit was tilted with respect to other planets, and it goes insider Neptune's orbit as part of its 248-year journey around the sun.

- **Key facts:** Pluto has five known moons, the largest of which is Charon. Charon is about half the size of Pluto itself, making it the largest satellite relative to the planet it orbits in our solar system. Pluto orbits the Sun about 3.6 billion miles (5.8 billion km) away on average. A year on Pluto is 248 Earth years. A day on Pluto lasts 153 hours, or about 6 Earth days.

- **Pluto** has a thin atmosphere of nitrogen, methane and carbon monoxide. The atmosphere has a blue tint and distinct layers of haze.

Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports Department of Youth affairs

- **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports Department of Youth affairs**

- **National Young Leaders Program** · National Young Leaders Program was launched in December, 2014, to develop leadership qualities among the youth, with 5 following components and is implemented through Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan.

- **i. Neighborhood Youth Parliament** ii. Youth for Development Program iii. National Young Leaders Award iv. National Youth Advisory council v. National Youth Development Fund.

- **Budget allocation for the year 2017-18 is Rs. 14.14 Crores (as per RE 2017-18).** · Neighborhood Youth Parliament Programs are being organized by involving NYKS-affiliated Youth Clubs with the objective of developing leadership qualities of the youth by involving them in debate/ discussions on contemporary issues.

- · **During the current year**, 5,216 Block level Programs have been organized, with participation of 4.47 lakh youth. In addition, 37,435 village-level neighborhood youth parliament programs involving 4.95 lakh youth.

- · **Under the Youth for Development Program component of the scheme,** during the year 300 IEC-Media and Publicity events with the participation of 68,241 youth, have been organized in 296 districts to create awareness/motivation about Shramdaan.

- · **In order to encourage the participation of youth clubs in Shramdaan** activities, during the year 655 youth clubs have been awarded for their outstanding work.

Revamped Khelo India Program:

- **Revamped Khelo India Program:** The Union Cabinet has approved the revamped Khelo India program with an estimated financial outlay of Rs.1, 756 crore for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20.

- **This marks a watershed moment** in the history of Indian sports, as the Program aims to encourage sports all over the country thus allowing the population to harness the power of sports through its cross-cutting influence and to use sports as a means of holistic development of children & youth, community development, social integration, gender equality, healthy lifestyle, national pride and economic opportunities related to sports development.

- **The revamped Khelo India Program** would impact the entire sports ecosystem in the country through its twelve verticals which includes playfield development; community coaching development; promotion of community sports; establishment of a strong sports competition structure at both school and university level as also for rural / indigenous sports, sports for persons with disability and women sports; filling up of critical gaps in sports infrastructure, including creation of hubs of sports excellence in select universities; talent identification and development; support to sports academies; implementation of a national physical fitness drive for school children; and sports for peace and development.

National Sports University

- **National Sports University** Announcement for setting up National Sports University, Manipur was made by the Government in budget speech 2014-15. Govt. of Manipur has provided land for setting up university in west Imphal. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone for NSU on 16th March, 2018.

- **National Sports University** will be first of its kind to promote sports education in the areas of Sports Science, Sports Technology, Sports Management, Sports Coaching and will also function as National training centre for selected training centres.

- **Pending finalization of National Sports University Bill**, National Sports University Society established under the Manipur Societies Registration Act, 1989, has started functioning from the Khuman Lampak Sports Complex at Imphal. The Academic Session of 2017-18 commenced w.e.f. 15 th January 2018 with two courses namely BPES and B.Sc (Sports Coaching).

Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games

- **Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games** An Olympic Task Force (OTF) was set up in January, 2017 to prepare a comprehensive Action Plan for effective preparation of Indian sportspersons in the next three Olympic Games 2020 Tokyo, 2024 & 2028. The Task Force was entrusted with the preparation of an overall strategy for sports facility, training selection procedure and other related matters. The OTF has submitted its report in August, 2017.

- **As per recommendation of the Task Force of OTF**, the Government of India (GoI) should set up an Empowered Steering Committee (ESC) as the single point entity with the responsibility to ensure proper preparation for the 2020 Olympics which are to be held in Tokyo (Japan). A Notification has already been issued with main Terms of Reference.

- **Athletes identified for Olympics are being provided financial assistance for** customized training within the country and abroad under Target Olympic Podium Scheme of MYAS (Stipend of Rs 50,000 per month to the elite athletes).

- **On the recommendation of the Olympic Task Force**, the Ministry has on 15.9.2017 decided to give stipend of Rs 50,000 per month to all the athletes selected under Target Olympic Podium Scheme to meet pocket expenses during their preparation for participation in international sports events. As on March 2018, 220 sportspersons are being provided with Out of Pocket allowance @ Rs.50,000/- pm.

Training Center for Para Athletes:

- **Training Center for Para Athletes:** Sports Minister laid the Foundation Stone at Gandhinagar, Gujarat for the first ever training center dedicated for Para Athletes on 5th February, 2017. The center is proposed at an estimated cost of over Rs. 50 crores.

- **It will have the World Class facilities** where Para athletes will be trained for various International Competitions including Asian Games, Common Wealth Games and Olympic Games. The center will have the following facilities for Para athletes:

- **i.Indoor Hall (64m x 42m) fully AC** ii.Elite Hostel (100 bedded) fully AC iii.VIP Accommodation for Foreign Guest (20 nos) AC. iv.Open land for warm-up.

International Boxing Academy:

- **International Boxing Academy:** A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) involving International Boxing Association (AIBA), Boxing Federation of India (BFI) and Sports Authority of India (SAI) was signed on 1st March 2017 in New Delhi to set up boxing academy at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, New Delhi and Rajiv Gandhi Sports Complex, Rohtak. A detailed proposal is awaited from Boxing Federation of India(BFI).

Successful conduct of 22nd Asian Athletic Championship, 2017:

- **Successful conduct of 22nd Asian Athletic Championship, 2017:** India conducted successfully 22nd Asian Athletic Championship, 2017from 06 – 09 July, 2017 at Bhubaneswar, Odisha. India topped in the medal tally by winning 29 medals (12 Gold, 5 Silver, 12 Bronze).

Rural Games:

- **Rural Games:** The first edition of Rural Games or Grameen Khel Mahotsavwas organized between 28th August to 3rd September, 2017 in Nizampur village in Delhi. The Rural Games aimed at popularising the indigenous games like wrestling, athletics etc. and also had fun games like Matka Race, Tug of War for senior citizens to add the fun element in the games to convey the message that every age category needs to take up and practice sports.

Launch of Sports Talent Search Portal:

- **Launch of Sports Talent Search Portal:** Sports Talent Search Portal was launched to spot the best talent from among the young population of the country, by the Vice President of India Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu at a function at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi on 28th August, 2017 in the presence of the MoS(I/C) YAS, Arjuna awardees and thousands of school children. The portal is providing a transparent platform for talented youth to upload their achievements.

- **Shortlisted applicants undergo selection trials** and those who pass the trials will be offered admission to SAI schemes. Since its inception the portal has been accessed by 140727 individuals of which 8016 sportspersons registered with portal.

- **433 applications of the eligible candidates** were forwarded to SAI centres of which 249 sportspersons were invited for the selection trials. Based on the performance in selection trials, the selection committee recommended 23 talented sportspersons for admission in SAI centres.

Financial assistance to Abhinav Bindra Foundation Trust:

- **Financial assistance to Abhinav Bindra Foundation Trust:** Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India has granted a financial assistance of up to Indian Rupees Five Crores Only (INR 5,00,00,000/-) ("Grant") from the National Sports Development Fund to Abhinav Bindra Foundation Trust (ABFT) to purchase certain state-of-the-art sports science equipments to establish and operate, a high-performance facility for rehabilitation, fitness-training and sports science ("Facility") at the Centre at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence, Bengaluru and named as the "Sports Authority of India (SAI)-Abhinav Bindra Targeting Performance Centre".

- **Indian athletes who are selected for training in Indian National Camps** ("National Campers") shall utilise the equipment and services at the centre free of cost. An agreement to this effect was signed between SAI and ABFT.

- **In addition to above**, financial assistance from National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) has also been granted to Mary Kom Regional Boxing Foundation, Pullela Gopichand Badminton Foundation, Usha School of Athletics (Kerala), SAI-Gopichand National Badminton Academy (Hyderabad), etc.

Successful conclusion of FIFA U-17 World Cup

- **Successful conclusion of FIFA U-17 World Cup** The 17th edition of the FIFA Under -17 World Cup was successfully held from 6th to 28th October 2017. First time in history, India hosted such a big international football competition.

- **The Venues of the competition** were JLN Stadium- New Delhi, PJN Stadium, Fatorda- Goa, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium- Kochi, Indira Gandhi Athletics Stadium- Guwahati, Vivekanand Yuva Bharti Krirangan, Salt Lake- Kolkata, DY Patil Stadium- Navi Mumbai. Twenty Four Teams from across the world participated in the tournament.

- **The Final Match was played between England and Spain before a packed** YubabharatiKrirangan Stadium, Salt Lake at Kolkata on 28th October, 2017 in which England were declared FIFA U-17 World Cup Champions.

Triple talaq Ordinance

- **Triple talaq Ordinance Background:** In August last year, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional a law that allowed Muslim men to divorce their wives simply by uttering "talaq" three times in quick succession. In a landmark 3-2 verdict, the apex court found the practice un-Islamic and "arbitrary", and disagreed that triple talaq was an integral part of religious practice.

- **What are the provisions?** Triple talaq remains cognizable with a maximum of three years imprisonment and a fine.

- **Triple talaq will be recognised** as a crime only when a woman or her blood relative files a complaint with the police. A compromise can be achieved only when the woman is willing and says so to a magistrate. A magistrate can grant bail only after the wife's consent. The custody of children from the marriage will go to the woman. The mother is entitled to maintenance determined by a magistrate. The law doesn't affect Jammu and Kashmir.

- **What is instant triple talaq?** Instant triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat is a practice that was challenged in the court. It is different from the practice of "talaq-ul-sunnat", which is considered to be the ideal form of dissolution of marriage contract among Muslims.

- **Under the latter form**, once the husband pronounces talaq, the wife has to observe a three-month iddat period covering three menstrual cycles during which the husband can arbitrate and re-conciliate with the wife. In case of cohabitation between the couple, during these three months, the talaq is revoked. However, when the period of iddat expires and the husband does not revoke the talaq either expressly or by consummation, the talaq is irrevocable and final.

- **In the practice of talaq-e-biddat**, when a man pronounces talaq thrice in a sitting, or through phone, or writes in a talaqnama or a text message, the divorce is considered immediate and irrevocable, even if the man later wishes to re-conciliate.

- **Status in neighbouring countries:** India and 22 other countries have banned triple talaq. India's neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are among the countries that have banned the practice of instant triple talaq prevalent among Muslims for divorce.

- **In Pakistan and Bangladesh**, the law requires the man who wishes to divorce his wife to give the 'arbitration council' a written notice of his having done so, and supply a copy of the same to his wife.

- **In Pakistan, triple talaq was abolished** when it issued its Muslim Family Law Ordinance in 1961, according to Geo News. In Afghanistan, divorce through three pronouncements made in only one sitting is considered to be invalid. Sri Lanka's Marriage and Divorce (Muslim) Act, 1951, amended up to 2006, also prohibits triple talaq.

- **Way ahead:** India follows a secular approach with religious groups being allowed to manage their own affairs within the law, and most of these divorcees never see justice or even a chance at reconciliation with the husband. The move to criminalise instant divorce, therefore, is being touted as a step forward for the rights of Indian Muslim women.

Atomic Energy Commission About AEC:

- **Atomic Energy Commission About AEC:** The Indian Atomic Energy Commission was first setup in August 1948 in the Department of Scientific Research.

- **Later on, in accordance** with a Government Resolution, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was established in the Department of Atomic Energy. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was setup on August 3, 1954 under the direct charge of the Prime Minister through a Presidential Order.

- **According to the Resolution constituting** the AEC, the Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Atomic Energy is ex-officio Chairman of the Commission. The other Members of the AEC are appointed on the recommendation of the Chairman, AEC and after approval by the Prime Minister.

- **Important functions of the Atomic Energy Commission are:** To organise research in atomic scientists in the country. To train, atomic scientists in the country. To promote nuclear research in commission's own laboratories as well as in India. To undertake prospecting of atomic minerals in India and to extract such minerals for use on industrial scale.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** The Cabinet also approved allocation of funds to the State under DAY-NRLM on a need basis for implementation of the Special Package without linking it with poverty ratio.

- **Impact:** This will help in covering all the vulnerable rural households in the State (estimated at two thirds of the total number of households) within a definite time frame. It will ensure mobilization of households under the auto inclusion category and households with at least one deprivation category listed in the Socio Economic Caste Census – 2011. It will also ensure coverage of all the blocks in Jammu & Kashmir under DAY-NRLM and ensures social inclusion, social development, promotion of livelihoods leading to poverty alleviation in the State. About Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):

- **The Government is implementing DAY-NRLM** across the country in all States and Union Territories (except Delhi and Chandigarh). The financial support under the programme is mainly in the form of Revolving Fund and Community Investment Funds, given as grants to the Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their federations.

- **DAY-NRLM also focuses on bank linkage of the institutions.** The programme has a special focus on women empowerment including a dedicated component for promoting farm and non-farm based livelihoods for women farmers in rural areas.

- **In addition, start-up enterprises at village levels** are also supported to promote entrepreneurial activities in those areas.

Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)

- **Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) About DRIP:** The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Government of India, with assistance from the World Bank, is implementing the DAM REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (DRIP), which would be a six-year project. The Central Dam Safety Organisation of Central Water Commission, assisted by a Consulting firm, is coordinating and supervising the Project implementation.

- **Goals:** The project originally envisaged the rehabilitation and improvement of about 223 dams within four states namely, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu and later Karnataka, Uttarakhand (UNVNL) and Jharkhand (DVC) joined DRIP and total number of dams covered under DRIP increased to 250. The project will also promote new technologies and improve Institutional capacities for dam safety evaluation and implementation at the Central and State levels and in some identified premier academic and research institutes of the country.

- **The project development** objectives of DRIP are: (i) to improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner, and (ii) to strengthen the dam safety institutional setup in participating states as well as at central level.

- **Significance of the project:** The project will improve the safety and operational performance of selected existing dams and mitigate risks to ensure safety of downstream population and property.

- **The primary beneficiaries** are both urban and rural communities dependent on reservoir and downstream communities, who are prone to risk associated with dam failure or operational failure.

- **Through institutional strengthening component**, effectiveness of Dam Safety Organisations will be increased to take the lead to make dams safe from structural and operational point of view through capacity building of staff and officials.

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

- **Global Environment Facility (GEF)**

- **Key facts:** The project is being funded by the GEF and implemented by the government of India (agriculture and environment ministries) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

- **Aim: The project** aims to transform agricultural production to generate global environmental benefits by addressing biodiversity conservation, land degradation, climate change mitigation and sustainable forest management. The project, to be implemented in five landscapes in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, strives to bring harmony between conservation and development efforts of the country.

- **About GEF:** The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. It is an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that addresses global environmental issues.

- **GEF funds** are available to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements. The World Bank serves as the GEF Trustee, administering the GEF Trust Fund.

- **It is a FINANCIAL MECHANISM** for five major international environmental conventions: the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Exercise Aviaindra-18:

- **Exercise Aviaindra-18:** What is it? Exercise Aviaindra is an Air Force level exercise between India and the Russian Federation. First Aviaindra was conducted in 2014 and has been planned as a bi-annual exercise.

- **Context:** Exercise Aviaindra 18 is being conducted at Lipetsk, Russia. Significance: The aim of the exercise is focused towards anti-terrorist operations in a bi-lateral scenario. The exercise would further enhance the co-operation and understanding each other's Concept of Operations.

India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project:

- **India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project:** Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina have jointly launched the construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project through video conferencing.

- **Key facts:** It is first such pipeline through which refined diesel will be supplied to Bangladesh from India. The project involves construction of 130-kilometre long pipeline that will connect Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.

- **Of the total stretch**, six-kilometre will be in Indian side and remaining 124 kilometres will in Bangladesh.

Ministry of Home Affairs

- **Ministry of Home Affairs**

- **5. (a) Reduction in Violence (Comparative Analysis of LWE Scenario: 2010 to 2013 & 2014 to 2017).** A comparison of various statistics of LWE violence over last four years (2014 to 2017) with preceding three years (2010- 2013) indicates a significant improvement in the LWE scenario in the country. Important parameters are as under:- · Incidents of violence reduced by 36.6% from 6524 to 4136.

- · **LWE related deaths decreased by 55.5% from 2428 to 1081.** · Elimination of LWE cadres increased by 14.6% from 445 to 510. · Surrenders by LWE cadres increased by 143% from 1387 to 3373.

- **(b) Geographical Spread reduced.** · States reporting violence reduced from 10 (2013) to 9 (2017). · Districts reporting violence reduced from 76 (2013) to 58 (2017). · Police Stations reporting violence reduced from 330 (2013) to 291 (2017).

- **6. Raising of CRPF Bastariya Battalion.** In order to enhance local representation in SF and also provide employment to local youth, a Bastariya Battalion has been raised. 743 Scheduled Tribes candidates from four most affected LWE districts of Chhattisgarh, Bijapur, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Sukma have been recruited. This figure includes 242 female candidates. All recruitment formalities have been completed and training is in progress.

- **7. Assistance under Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme.** Under this scheme assistance is provided to 106 LWE affected districts for operational needs of Security Forces. Rs 1120.73 crore was disbursed over last four financial years (2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 & 2017-18) as compared to Rs 875 Cr in the preceding four financial years (2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14).

- **8. Fortified Police Stations Scheme.** The scheme was approved in 2010. 386 Police Stations out of 400 have been completed. 320 Police Stations constructed in the last four years.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS (DEVELOPMENT RELATED ISSUES)

- **9. Road Requirement Plan Phase–I (RRP-I) (MORTH).** RRP-I is under implementation for improving road connectivity in 34 LWE affected districts of 8 States i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. It envisages construction 5,422 km road length with an estimated cost of ☐ 8,585 crores, of which, 4537 km roads have been completed of which 1608 km roads constructed in last four years in most difficult areas.

- **10. LWE Mobile Towers Project (DoT).** The scheme was approved in 2014. 2329 towers have been installed to improve connectivity in LWE affected areas. Further 4072 mobile towers are under consideration in Phase-II.

- **11. Skill Development (MOSDE).** Launched in 2011 in 34 LWE affected districts. The scheme has been extended to 47 LWE affected districts in 2016 in which 47 ITIs and 68 Skill Development Centre would be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 407.85 crores. Of these 15 ITIs and 43 SDCs have been established.

- **12. Financial Inclusion.** The Department of Posts is opening 1789 Post Offices in 32 most LWE affected districts, where, there is no Post Office within 03 km of distance. Of these 565 Post offices are opened. Besides, the Department of Financial Services has opened 428 new Bank branches and installed 1045 ATMs in 35 most affected LWE districts in 33 months (from 01.04.2015 to 31.12.2017).

- **13. Government on 27.09.2017 has approved continuation of existing schemes till 2020 with increased outlays and additional features.**

SCHEMES OF MHA The main schemes implemented by the MHA in LWE affected areas are as under:

- **(i) Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme:** The Government of India reimburses the LWE affected State Governments the security related expenditure incurred on; ex-gratia payment to the family of civilian/security forces killed in LWE violence. training and operational needs of security forces, rehabilitation of surrendered Left Wing Extremist cadres, security related infrastructure for village defense committees and publicity material. The scheme has been strengthened with substantial increase in the rate of reimbursement. In addition, new items like compensation for incapacitation of security forces and property damage have been included for the first time.

- **(ii) Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS)** including construction of 250 Fortified Police Stations in LWE affected states: The Scheme has been revived for strengthening of the Special Intelligence Branches (SIBs) & Special Forces of the States and construction of 250 Fortified Police Stations in LWE areas. The next phase of fortification of police stations has been subsumed in Special Infrastructure Scheme.

Portals to strengthen Women Safety launched

- **Portals to strengthen Women Safety launched** Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal to check objectionable online content. National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) to aid in monitoring & investigation of sexual crimes.

- **Details:** Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal: The portal will receive 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 portal is convenient** and user friendly that will enable complainants in reporting cases without disclosing their identity. This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organizations and responsible citizens to anonymously report complaints pertaining to child pornography, child sexual abuse material or sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.

- **Complainants can also upload** the objectionable content and URL to assist in the investigation by the State Police. The complaints registered through this portal will be handled by police authorities of respective State/UTs. There are other features such as a victim or complainant can track his/her report by opting for "report and track" option using his/her mobile number.

- **The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** will proactively identify such objectionable content and take up with intermediaries for its removal. For this NCRB has already been notified as the Government of India agency to issue notices under Section 79(3)b of IT Act.

- **National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO):** The National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), which is accessible only to law enforcement agencies, will assist in effectively tracking and investigating cases of sexual offences. It is a central database of "sexual offenders" in the country which will be maintained by the NCRB for regular monitoring and tracking by the State Police. The database is accessible only to the law enforcement agencies for investigation and monitoring purpose.

- **The database will include offenders convicted** under charges of rape, gang rape, POCSO and eve teasing. At present the database contains 4.4 lakh entries. The State Police have been requested to regularly update the database from 2005 onwards. The database includes name, address, photograph and fingerprint details for each entry. However, the database will not compromise any individual's privacy.

- **Way ahead:** The two portals launched are part of efforts in the direction of strengthening security of women and children. However, the field level challenges have to be overcome by the Police at the ground level to ensure speedy justice to the victims. The security agencies should fully utilize potential of the two portals and update the database regularly for greater effectiveness.

- **There is also need for timebound completion** of investigation in sexual crimes to instill deterrence among potential offenders.

Aspirational Districts Program

- **The plan:** The visit of officers of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurships will begin with a meeting with Districts Collector / CEO-Zila Parishad and other State level officers implementing the programs.

- **The team will also have interactions** with Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras, training providers, ITIs, Polytechnics and JSS administrations.

- **The team would also have conversation** with students and industry present in these districts. This will enable a stock taking of the available skill ecosystem vis-à-vis the available data and provide good understanding of challenges to be addressed at the district level to make youth employable.

- **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.

About Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna:

- **About Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna:** Aim: It aims to financially support those who lost their jobs or rendered jobless for whatsoever reasons due to changing employment pattern. Its beneficiaries will be insured persons covered under Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 for period of two years continuously.

- **Key features:** Cash assistance: Under the scheme, relief will be payable in cash directly to bank account of insured persons in case of unemployment. This financial assistance will be given to insured persons even while they search for new engagement. Beneficiary insured workers will be paid money, from their own contribution towards ESI scheme, in cash through bank account transfer.

- **Under this scheme**, workers will be able to draw 47% of their total contributions towards ESIC after remaining unemployed for at least three months from date of leaving their previous jobs. They can choose to receive the cash at one go or in instalments. It will be applicable to all factories and establishments employing at least 10 workers.

- **About ESI:** ESI is self-financing social security and health insurance scheme for Indian workers.

- **It is autonomous corporation** by statutory creation under Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. It is managed by Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) according to rules and regulations stipulated there in the ESI Act 1948.

'Sputum sample transportation' Project

- **'Sputum sample transportation' Project**

- **What is Sputum?** Sputum is a thick fluid that is produced in the lungs and the airways leading to the lungs. A sample of sputum is usually collected by the person coughing.

- **TB Sputum Test:** The sputum test is often the first TB test to be used in countries with a high rate of TB infection. Sputum microscopy is inexpensive and simple, and people can be trained to do it relatively quickly and easily.

- **Need for and significance of postal transportation of Sputum:** Most of the patients are not diagnosed because the specimen does not reach the laboratory due to non-availability of specimen transport mechanisms.

- **Transport of collected specimen** also spares the patient's from travelling to the reference laboratory. Prompt transport of specimen followed by efficacious testing will enable appropriate management of the TB patients and reduced disease transmission.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** Background: Saudi Arabia has a history of bailing out Pakistan financially. In 2014, six months after Pakistan obtained its last IMF bailout, Saudi Arabia loaned it $1.5 billion that the government used to strengthen its rupee currency.

- **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?** Many experts are not in favour of India supporting CPEC. This is so because 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.

- **Way ahead:** Only by respecting the sovereignty of countries involved, can regional connectivity corridors fulfil their promise and avoid differences and discord. China is a country which is very sensitive on matters concerning its sovereignty. So it is expected that they would have some understanding of other people's sensitivity about their sovereignty. Meanwhile, India must uphold its specific reservations on the project and draft a strategy to revert suitably in case CPEC is offered formally through official channels.

IAEA safeguards

- **With this,** a total of 26 Indian nuclear facilities will be under the international nuclear energy watchdog.

- **IAEA safeguards: What are they? Safeguards are a set of technical measures** applied by the IAEA on nuclear material and activities, through which the Agency seeks to independently verify that nuclear facilities are not misused and nuclear material not diverted from peaceful uses. States accept these measures through the conclusion of safeguards agreements.

- **The objective of IAEA Safeguards** is to deter the spread of nuclear weapons by the early detection of the misuse of nuclear material or technology. This provides credible assurances that States are honouring their legal obligations that nuclear material is being used only for peaceful purposes.

- **Need and implementation: IAEA safeguards are an essential** component of the international security system. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty's Article 3, each Non-Nuclear Weapon State is required to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

- **Significance: Within the world's nuclear** non-proliferation regime, the IAEA's safeguards system functions as a confidence-building measure, an early warning mechanism, and the trigger that sets in motion other responses by the international community if and when the need arises. Over the past decade, IAEA safeguards have been strengthened in key areas.

- **About IAEA: The IAEA is the world's centre for cooperation** in the nuclear field. It was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations family. The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.

- **It seeks to promote the peaceful** use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons. IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. The IAEA has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

- **The IAEA serves** as an intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide.

Missile 'Prahar' About Prahar:

- **'Prahar',** developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is capable of filling the gap between the multi-barrel rocket system 'Pinaka' and medium-range ballistic missile 'Prithvi'. It can also engage multiple targets in different directions.

- **It has length of 7.3 meter**, diameter of 420 mm and weighs 1,280 kg. It has operational range of 150 km and flight altitude of 35 km.

- **It is a solid-fuelled** short-range missile fitted with inertial navigation system.

- **The missile** is equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, guidance and electromechanical actuation systems with advanced on board computer. It is a quick-reaction, all-weather, all-terrain, highly accurate battlefield support tactical weapon system.

National Sports Awards: National Sports Awards 2018 have been announced.

- **Key facts:** National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports. Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of four year.

- **Arjuna Award is given for consistency** outstanding performance for four years. Dronacharya Award for coaches for producing medal winners at prestigious International sports events.

- **Dhyan Chand Award for life time contribution** to sports development. Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar is given to the corporate entities (both in private and public sector) and individuals who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.

- **MAKA Trophy:** Overall top performing university in inter-university tournaments is given Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy

UPSC=Fever

Ayushman Bharat –Pradhan Mantri Jan AarogyaYojana (AB-PMJAY) to be launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in Ranchi, Jharkahnd on September 23, 2018

- **India takes a giant leap towards providing accessible and affordable healthcare** to the common man with the launch of Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan AarogyaYojana (AB-PMJAY) by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 23rd September, 2018 at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

- **Under the vision of Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan AarogyaYojana (AB-PMJAY)** shall be implemented so that each and every citizen receives his due share of health care. With Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan AarogyaYojana, the government is taking healthcare protection to a new aspirational level.

- This is the **"world's largest government funded healthcare program" targeting more than 50 crore beneficiaries.**

- **BENEFITS UNDER THE SCHEME:** Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan ArogyaYojana (PMJAY) will provide a cover of up to Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. Over 10.74 crore vulnerable entitled families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) will be eligible for these benefits.

- **PMJAY will provide cashless** and paperless access to services for the beneficiary at the point of service. PMJAY will help reduce catastrophic expenditure for hospitalizations, which impoverishes people and will help mitigate the financial risk arising out of catastrophic health episodes.

- **Entitled families** will be able to use the quality health services they need without facing financial hardships. When fully implemented, PMJAY will become the world's largest fully government-financed health protection scheme. It is a visionary step towards advancing the agenda of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

- **FEATURES OF THE SCHEME** Ayushman Bharat is a progression towards promotive, preventive, curative, palliative and rehabilitative aspects of Universal Healthcare through access of Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) at the primary level and provision of financial protection for accessing curative care at the secondary and tertiary levels through engagement with both public and private sector.

- **It adopts a continuum** of care approach, comprising of two inter-related components: Creation of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres which will bring health care closer to the homes of the people.

- **These centres will provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC),** covering both maternal and child health services and non-communicable diseases, including free essential drugs and diagnostic services. The first Health and Wellness Centre was launched by the Prime Minister at Jangla, Bijapur, Chhatisgarh on 14th April 2018.

- **The second component is the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)** which provides health protection cover to poor and vulnerable families for secondary and tertiary care.

- **The Health and Wellness Centres will play a critical role** in creating awareness about PMJAY, screening for non-communicable diseases, follow-up of hospitalization cases among others. The features of the scheme are as follows.

Pradhan Mantri Jan ArogyaYojana: Financial protection from catastrophic expenditure:

- **71st Round of National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO)** has found 85.9% of rural households and 82% of urban households have no access to healthcare insurance/assurance. More than 17% of Indian population spend at least 10% of household budgets for health services. Catastrophic healthcare related expenditure pushes families into debt, with more than 24% households in rural India and 18% population in urban area have met their healthcare expenses through some sort of borrowings.

- **PMJAY primarily targets the poor** , deprived rural families and identified occupational category of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data for both rural and urban areas as well as the active families under the RashtriyaSwasthyaBimaYojana (RSBY).

- **Approximately 10.74 crore identified families** (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) will be entitled to get the benefits. There is no cap on family size and age as well as restriction on pre-existing conditions. Pradhan Mantri Jan ArogyaYojana: Hospitalization cover from inpatient care to post hospitalisation care:

- **The objectives of the Yojana** are to reduce out of pocket hospitalisation expenses, fulfil unmet needs and improve access of identified families to quality inpatient care and day care surgeries. The Yojana will provide a coverage up to Rs. 5,00,000 per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization through a network of Empanelled Health Care Providers (EHCP).

- **The EHCP network will provide cashless and paperless access** to services for the beneficiaries at the both public and private hospitals. The services will include 1350 procedures covering pre and post hospitalization, diagnostics, medicines etc.

- **The Yojana beneficiaries** will be able to move across borders and access services across the country through the provider network seamlessly. Pradhan Mantri Jan ArogyaYojana in alliance with the States:

- **The scheme architecture and formulation** has undergone a truly federal process, with stakeholder inputs taken from all States and UTs through the national conclaves, sectoral working groups, intensive field exercises and piloting of key modules.

- **The Scheme is principle based rather than rule based** , allowing States enough flexibility in terms of packages, procedures, scheme design, entitlements as well as other guidelines while ensuring that key benefits of portability and fraud detection are ensured at a national level.

- **States have the option to use an existing Trust/Society** or set up a new Trust/Society to implement the Scheme as State Health Agency and will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. States can implement the Scheme through an insurance company or directly through the Trust/Society/Implementation Support Agency or a mixed approach.

- **PROGRESS OF THE SCHEME:** MOUs with the states: 30 states and UTs have signed the MoU and have started working on implementation of the mission. Maharashtra has joined on 14th August 2018. MoU has been signed with Tamil Nadu on 11th September 2018.

- **Pilot launch of PMJAY:** Pilot launch of the scheme has started. The focus of the pilot launch of the mission is to test and enhance the developed IT systems and streamline the state preparedness for a comprehensive launch.

- **The pilot been done in around 22 States / UTs (Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Dadar Nagar & Haveli, Daman & Diu, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Goa, Maharashtra among others)** .

- **The pilot launch is taking place** in specific hospitals to test the Beneficiary Identification System (BIS) and Transaction Management System (TMS) systems. The pilot launch involves over 1280 hospitals.

Pradhan MantriAarogyaMitra (PMAM):

- **The scheme is creating a cadre of certified frontline health service** professionals called Pradhan MantriAarogyaMitras (PMAMs) who will be primary point of facilitation for the beneficiaries to avail treatment at the hospital and thus, act as a support system to streamline health service delivery.

- **MoU was signed between National Health Agency** and Ministry of Skills Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on 27th August 2018 in New Delhi.

- **AarogyaMitras training** is being conducted in collaboration with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Ministry of Skill Development to strengthen implementation and operational preparedness.

- **Training has already been conducted** in across 20 states and around 3519 AarogyaMitras have been trained so far. Training programs for State, District and PMAMs have been conducted in 27 states.

- **A total of around 3936 personnel** have been trained at state, district and PMAM levels.

- **Hospital Empanelment:** So far 15,686 applications for hospital empanelment have been received.

- **Fraud detection and Data privacy:** Detailed guidelines have been prepared to address the issues around potential fraudulent activities that could be committed by any individual or organization.

- **Anti-fraud cells** will be established at the national and state level, and strong IT tools will be deployed to prevent and detect fraud.

- **NHA Information Security Policy & Data Privacy Policy are being institutionalized to provide adequate guidance and set of controls** on the secure handling of Beneficiaries Personal Data & Sensitive Personal Data in compliance with all laws and regulations applicable. International standards/regulation, like ISO 27001, National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); and Indian regulations such as Aadhaar Act 2016, Indian IT Act 2000, IT (amendment) Act, 2008 and Personal Data Protection Bill by former judge BN Sri Krishnan (Yet to be enacted) are referenced while drafting these policies.

- **IT systems update:** Beneficiary Identification System (BIS) has been developed to identify and verify the beneficiaries at CSCs and point of care.

- **NHA has tested the software** in 80 districts across 10 states and further enhanced the system based on feedback.

- **Hospital empanelment module** has been active from 4th July and has already received empanelment requests from over 7,857 hospitals across 354 districts in 22 States / UTs. A comprehensive

- **Transaction Management System (TMS)** has been developed to facilitate transactions from hospitals (such as filing pre-authorization requests and claims submission).

- **There have been trainings** across the state concerning the operability of IT systems to enhance the state preparedness and receive feedback on the IT systems.

- **Focused workshops have been organized** to train the state level officials in operating the developed IT systems.

- **Robust measures are being put in place** in the IT platform to ensure privacy and security of the data.

- **Beneficiary related:** MoU has been signed with Common Service Centre (CSC) for Beneficiary Identification and will utilize the over 3 lakh village level entrepreneurs for identifying beneficiaries.

- **Personalized Letters with unique family code** are in the process of being sent to the identified families in the Additional Data Collection Data (ADCD) drive. This will drive awareness among the beneficiaries and further ease the identification process when they visit points of care or CSC centres.

- **Ayushman Bharat** – Pradhan Mantri Jan AarogyaYojana (AB-PMJAY) is a paradigm shift from sectorial, segmented and fragmented approach of service delivery through various national and State schemes to a bigger, more comprehensive and better converged and need based service delivery of secondary and tertiary care.

President of India Inaugurates Centenary Celebrations of Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

- **The President of India** , Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in New Delhi today (September 22, 2018).

- **Speaking on the occasion, the President said that languages connect people. There are numerous languages and dialects in India. All of them have their special nature and beauty** . This diversity adds to India's culture and well-being. He said that institutions like the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha have played a very important role in strengthening the emotional unity of our country. He noted that the Sabha has developed a network of about 20,000 Hindi campaigners.

- **The President said that every Indian** should try to learn an Indian language other than his or her own. When a Hindi-speaking youth learns Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam or Kannada, he or she is introduced to a very rich tradition. This knowledge can create new opportunities for the individual.

Plogging Should be a Way of Life: Durga Shankar Mishra

- **In an early morning initiative** for making our cities clean and motivate people to adopt Swachhta as a way of life, more than 300 officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, NDMC, NBCC, CPWD, HPL and other entities under the Ministry took part in a plogging exercise here today.

- **More than 2 hours long exercise** was led by Sh Durga Shankar Mishra, Secretary, M/O Housing and Urban affairs which started from Janpath market area and culminated near Shastri Bhawan, also motivated scores of bystanders, onlookers, taxi drivers, vendors and morning walkers to join in this unique exercise.

- **More than 500 filled packets of garbage** including broken bottles, ice cream and gutkha wrappers, cups, packets, etc were collected as part of the exercise.

- **Sh Mishra used the opportunity to also talk to the people who gathered on adopting Plogging** as a way of exercise and suggested that it can be undertaken as a way of routine to ensure a clean and garbage free city.

- **The event was organised as part of Prime Ministers initiative of "Swachhata Hi Sewa"** by the Ministry today. Several members of the NGO, CFAR also participated in the event.

- **Sh. Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary - MoHUA, encouraged everyone to take up plogging as a regular initiative** . He said that picking up the litter should be carried out simultaneously with walking or jogging. "Self-littering should not be done and all the waste and litter should always be thrown in a dustbin nearby." he added. Sh. Mishra also encouraged several shopkeepers on the way to take responsibility for throwing the waste in garbage bins only.

- **Enthused by the tremendous response** , it has been decided that the next plogging drive will be carried out on 30th September, 2018 from Nehru Park, Chankyapuri to Yashwant place in New Delhi. About 300 students from Sharda Vakil School of Art and National Centre for Arts will also be roped in as volunteers on the occasion.

PM to launch Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana at Ranchi, inauguratePakyong Airport in Sikkim

- **The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi** , will launch the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) at Ranchi, Jharkhand, on September 23, 2018.Under this scheme, over 10 crore families will be provided health assurance worth Rs. 5 lakh each, every year.

- **The Prime Minister will visit an exhibition** on the PMJAY. He will witness a demonstration of activities such as beneficiary identification, and e-card creation.

- **At the same event, the Prime Minister** will lay the Foundation Stone for medical colleges at Chaibasa and Koderma. He will inaugurate 10 Health and Wellness Centres. He will address the gathering, before departing for Gangtok, Sikkim.

- **On September 24, the Prime Minister** will inaugurate Pakyong Airport, which will bring the State of Sikkim on the country's aviation map. The airport will provide a big boost to connectivity in the Himalayan State, and also give a fillip to tourism. The Prime Minister will arrive at Pakyong Airport, where he will be briefed about the airport and terminal building. He shall unveil a plaque to mark the inauguration of Pakyong Airport. He shall later address a gathering.

MINISTRY OF SHIPPING INLAND WATERWAYS

- · **Only 5 National Waterways** in last 30 years. Cheap, fuel efficient and eco friendly cargo/passenger movement. Reduce congestion in road and rail traffic.

- · **Central Legislation to declare** 106 additional inland waterways as national waterways

- · **The total number of national waterways** has become 111. This has paved the way for better regulation and development of the national waterways in the country

- · **The Government has taken initiatives** to earmark 2.5 % ofCentral Road Fund (CRF) for development of NationalWaterways by reducing the share of NH cess from 41.5% to39 %

JAL MARG VIKAS PROJECT (JMVP) ON NATIONAL WATERWAY-I: RIVER GANGA

- **Jal Marg Vikas' (National Waterway-I: River Ganga)** Project envisages to develop a fairway with upto 3 meters depth between Varanasi and Haldia covering a distance of 1380 kms at an estimated cost of Rs. 5369 crore.

- **On completion, the project** would enable commercial navigation of 1500-2000 ton vessels. The project is being implemented by the IWAI with technical and investment support of World Bank and is to be completed by 2022-23.

- **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.

Multimodal Terminal, Haldia

- **61 acres of** land in the Haldia Dock Complex has been taken on 30 year lease from Kolkata Port Trust. Work for construction of the Terminal at a cost of Rs. 517 crore has been awarded on 27.12.2016 and is scheduled to be completed in Dec, 2019.

- **Construction of New Navigational Lock , Farakka** The work has been awarded on 15.11.2016 at a cost of Rs. 359.19 crore and is scheduled to be completed in April 2019.

Development of National Waterway-4

- **Foundation stone laid for development** work for Phase-I of National Waterway-4 from Muktiyala to Vijaywada on 3rd October, 2017.

- **The project would facilitate movement** of construction material for Amravati, the upcoming capital city of Andhra Pradesh.

- **The work for dredging and setting up of floating terminals has commenced.**

Development of eight (8) new NWs

- **• Mandovi, Zuari, Camberjua, Barak, Gandak, Rupnarayan, Alappuzha-Kottayam-Athirampuzha Canal and Sunderbans National Waterways taken up for development during 2017-18.**

- **• The three NWs of Goa to be developed after signing of the MoU between IWAI, Mormugao Port Trust and Captain of Ports, Govt. of Goa.**

- **• The bandelling and channel marking in Gandak river has been issued and work will start shortly. • Development of fairway in Barak river** has been awarded and the contractor is mobilizing the equipment at site.

- **• The tendering for fairway and pantoon** at Hemnagar of Sunderbans waterways is under finalization. • The dredging and floating terminals at Rupnarayan river is also under finalization.

Movement of Cargo on NWs

- **• The IWAI is focusing on movement** of cargo on the National Waterways so that by the time the terminals and other infrastructure are established they are utilized effectively.

- **• A pilot run of defence cargo (eight Army trucks and 20 personnel)** transportation on IWAI's Ro-Ro vessel, MV Gopinath Bordoloi (capacity 250 DWT from Pandu (Guwahati) to Bogibil (Dibrugarh) on National Waterway-2 (river Brahmaputra) in Assam was conducted successfully during 24th to 29th April, 2017.

- **• IWAI's cargo vessel MV V.V. Giri moved 240 metric tonnes of bagged cement** of a prominent manufacturer from Lolaghat, West Bengal (Rupnarayan river) to Bhagalpur (on Ganga).

- **• Transportation of 50,610 ton of cement from Gaighat (Patna) to Bhagalpur** and 73,400 ton km stone chips from Sahibganj (Jharkhand) to Manihari (Bihar) on NW-1 was completed during April, 2017.

Developing inland waterways in the North East

- **The Shipping Ministry is developing inland waterways in the North East .** • Connect north east region to Kolkata, Haldia, Mongla and Chittagong ports

- **• Dredging in Bangladesh to enable barge movement into North-East** • Set up Roll on- Roll off services across River banks

- **• Facilitate movement for armed forces** · 12 floating terminals are already in place on Brahmaputra- Hatsingimari, Dhubri, Jogighopa, Pandu, Tezpur, Silghat, Biswanathghat, Neamati, Sengajan, Bogibil,

- **Dibrugarh/Oakland and Oriumghat** · 56 floating terminals have been sanctioned for Brahmaputra and 16 floating terminals have been sanctioned for Barak river (Investment of Rs. 35 crore)

- **· Dredging is being done. Night navigation is being enabled.** · 4 Differential Global Positioning System stations for safe navigation of vessels- Dhubri,

- **Jogighopa, Biswanthghat and Dibrugarh** · Pandu terminal has been developed as a multi-modal modern Terminal, equipped with cargo handling facilities, transit sheds.

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Raising of bonds by IWAI

- **• On the basis** of Finance Minister`s Budget Announcement 2016-17, IWAI was permitted to raise Rs. 1000 crore as bonds through Extra Budgetary Resources.

- **IWAI raised Rs. 340 crore during the financial year 2016-17** and the balance amount of Rs. 660 crore has been raised in Oct, 2017. The EBRs raised are being utilized by IWAI exclusively for capital expenditure for development of National Waterways (NWs) during 2017-18.

- **Institutional funding** for development and maintenance of National Waterways (NWs)- Allocation of 2.5 per cent of Central Road Fund

- **• The Union Cabinet** has accorded its approval to a proposal for amendment of Central Road Fund Act, 2000 to allocate 2.5 per cent of the proceeds of Central Road Fund (CRF) for development and maintenance of National Waterways (NWs) and a commensurate reduction in the share provided for development of National Highways.

- **• To implement the decision** , the Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017 has been introduced in Lok Sabha on 24.07.2017.

SAGARMALA

- **• Over 500 projects** with infrastructure investment of more than Rs. 8 Lac Crore

- • **289 projects** of Rs. 2.17 Lac Crore already under implementation / development

- • **Coastal shipping to increase from 80 MTPA to 200+ MTPA by 2025** • Sagarmala will enable creation of 10 million (1 crore) jobs (including 4 million direct jobs)

- • **Sagarmala program hinges on four pillars namely** A. Port modernization & New Port Development (234 projects; Rs.1.4 lac Cr) B. Port Connectivity Enhancement (206 Projects; Rs.2.5 lac Cr)

- • **C. Port-led Industrialization (46 Projects; Rs.4.4 lac Cr)** D. Coastal Community Development (22 Projects; Rs.2,700 Cr)

Port Modernization & New Port Development

- • **Roadmap** for increasing port capacity to 3000+ MMTPA

- • **Master plans finalized for 12 major ports** • 142 port capacity expansion projects (cost: Rs. 91,254 Cr and capacity of 884 MMTPA).

- • **New Port Development** • TEFRs prepared for 6 new port locations - Vadhavan (Maharashtra), Enayam (Tamil Nadu), Tajpur (West Bengal), Paradip Outer Harbour (Odisha), Sirkazhi (Tamil Nadu), Belekeri (Karnataka).

- • **DPR under preparation for Port of Vadhavan, Enayam and Paradip Outer Harbour.** • Under the Project Unnati, 116 initiatives to unlock 110 MMTPA in Major ports

Port Connectivity Enhancement

- **i. Rail Connectivity** • 37 last mile works (cost: Rs. 16,207 Cr) at 9 major ports taken up by IPRCL.

- • **33 projects** (cost: Rs. 42,703 Cr) taken up by Indian Railways. • DPR is under preparation for the heavy haul rail corridor between Talcher & Paradip to promote coastal shipping of coal.

- **ii. Road Connectivity** · 93 road projects identified under Sagarmala (cost: Rs. 166,535 Cr)

- **iii. Coastal Berth Scheme** • 47 projects (cost Rs. 2,302.05Cr) taken up for financial assistance under the Scheme.

Port-linked Industrialization

- • **14 Coastal** Economic Zones (CEZs) in Maritime States and UTs identified

- • **CEZ perspective plans prepared** • Preparation of Master Plans for 4 pilot CEZs (in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh)

- • **29 industrial clusters** across three sectors, namely – Energy, Materials and Discrete Manufacturing, identified. • Based on availability of land with the Major Ports, Ministry of Shipping is developing:

- • **SEZ at JNPT** • Free Trade Warehousing Zone (FTWZ) at Ennore • Smart Port Industrial Cities (SPICs) at Kandla and Paradip

Coastal Community Development

- **• 3 areas under Coastal Community Development are:** • Skill development for coastal communities

- **• Infrastructure for fisheries** • Coastal tourism • Ministry is part-funding select fishing harbour projects. Rs. 70.81 Cr released for 8 projects (cost: Rs. 466.42 Cr).

- **• Skill gap study of 21 coastal districts.** • 1,153 candidates trained and 600 candidates placed • Fire safety training project for workers at Alang-Sosiya Shipyard.- 1,909 people trained.

- **• Centre of Excellence** in Maritime & Shipbuilding being setup at Vizag and Mumbai. MOU signed with IRS and Siemens in Nov 2017. • Multi-Skill Development Centre linked to JNPT being setup

PORTS

- **Improved port performance** • To benchmark Major Ports to international standards, 116 initiatives identified – 86 implemented and remaining to be implemented by 2019.

- **• 80 MTPA capacity unlocked.** • Major focus is on improvement of efficiency and productivity in Major Ports. • Improvement in efficiency parameters of major ports during April to December, 2017

- ➢ **Avg. Turn-around Time improved from 73 to 65 hrs.** ➢ Avg. Output Ship Berthday improved from 14379 to 14979 tonnes ➢ Operating surplus of Major Ports has increased by 11% as compared to corresponding period of last year.

- **• 4th Container Terminal at JNPT, the largest PPP Project in Port Sector in India, is ready for operation.** • KPL and JNPT have raised foreign currency denominated loans. • Port Capacity re-rated based on Berthing Policy as per international norms.

- **• Rationalisation of maintenance dredging at Major Ports.** • 100% FDI under the automatic route is being allowed for port development projects

- **New Port Development-TEFRs** prepared for 6 new port locations - Vadhavan (Maharashtra), Enayam (Tamil Nadu), Tajpur (West Bengal), Paradip Outer Harbour (Odisha), Sirkazhi (Tamil Nadu), Belekeri (Karnataka). DPR under preparation for Port of Vadhavan, Enayam and Paradip Outer Harbour.

- **43% increase in operating profits of the ports.** • Promoting Ship building and Ship Repair- from 2025 only India- made ships for government purpose.

- **Legislation** • To bring in more transparency, efficiency, autonomy and professionalism in the management of Major Ports, the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2016 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16.12.2016. The proposed law will replace the existing Major Port Trust Act, 1963.

- **Department** Related Parliamentary Standing Committee has given its recommendations on the Bill and Government has approved official amendments to be introduced on Port Authorities Bill.

- **New Policies** • Captive Policy in Major Ports to encourage Port - dependent Industries from July, 2016.

- **Berthing Policy** to increase productivity and greater transparency from August, 2016.

- **Stevedoring Policy** for port efficiency and revenue optimization from July, 2016.

- **Revised Model Concession Agreement** for PPP project in Major Ports has been approved by the Government on 3.1.2018 to enhance confidence of investors.

- **Security clearance guidelines for PPP projects** and dredging projects have been revised to enhance the validity period of security clearance of companies participating in Major Port projects.

Ease of Doing Business

- **Ease of Doing Business** • 42 Action Points identified for enabling trading across border out of which 35 have been implemented. These include:-

- **Elimination of manual forms,** increase in Direct Port Delivery volumes from 3% in December, 2016 to 35.98% in December, 2017,

- • **Issue of e-Delivery Orders** by Shipping Lines, installation of RFID based gate automation system in the Major Ports,

- • **Integration of the Port Community System** with Customs ICEGATE for seamless exchange of messages and installation of Container scanners.

Deendayal Port

- **Deendayal Port** In recognition of the invaluable contribution and sacrifices made by Pandit Deendayal Upadhaya towards serving the nation and also upliftment of the poor & downtrodden, the name of Kandla Port has been changed to Deendayal Port.

- **Chahbahar Port in Iran** India is also engaged in the development of Chahbahar Port in Iran. An MoU has been signed between the two countries in this regard. Inauguration ceremony of the Phase-I of Shahid Beheshti Port at Chabahar, Iran was held on 3rd December,2017 by the Hon'ble President of Iran.

- **Coastal and Cruise Shipping** i. To develop cruise shipping and tourism in the country, Government has constructed New cruise terminals at Mormugao port and Chennai Port.

- **ii. The revised SoPs** have been implemented at major ports w.e.f 29.11.17.

- **iii. E-visa facility** was extended to 5 major ports namely Mumbai Port, Mormugao Port, New Mangalore Port, Cochin Port and Chennai Port.

- **iv. A uniform tariff** rate at all major ports has been fixed at $ 0.35 per GRT to attract cruise vessels in India.

- **v. Facility for foreign flag** passenger vessels to call at Indian ports without obtaining license from DG(S) has been extended from February, 2019 to February, 2024.

Coastal Shipping

- • **On the request of Ministry of Shipping** , Department of Fertilizer has included the primary movement of subsidized urea and P&K fertilizers by rail and/or coastal shipping or inland water transportation including road bridging on 29th March, 2017.

- **Now movement of subsidized fertilizers** by coastal route and road also qualifies for reimbursement of freight subsidy which will encourage the coastal movement of fertilizer.

- • **Ro-Ro ships carrying cargo from Chennai port** to Mongla port in Bangladesh were flagged off on the coastal shipping route in October 2017.

- • **Steel cargo from Vizag port to Ahmedabad, Mumbai** and Kochi was sent through the coastal shipping route.

- **NavIC (Navigation Indian Constellation)** • With the successful launch of IRNSS-1G, India joined the elite list of countries with their own satellite navigation system

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018

- **The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes** (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot, on August 3, 2018.

- **It seeks to amend the Scheduled Castes** and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The Act prohibits the commission of offences against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and establishes special courts for the trial of such offences and the rehabilitation of victims.

- **In 2018, the Supreme Court** stated that for persons accused of committing an offence under the Act, approval of the Senior Superintendent of Police will be required before an arrest is made. Further, the Deputy Superintendent of Police may conduct a preliminary enquiry to find out whether there is a prima facie case under the Act.

- **The Bill states that the investigating officer** will not require the approval of any authority for the arrest of an accused. Further, it provides that a preliminary enquiry will not be required for the registration of a First Information Report against a person accused under the Act.

- **The Act states that persons accused of committing** an offence under the Act cannot apply for anticipatory bail. The Bill seeks to clarify that this provision will apply despite any judgements or orders of a court that provide otherwise.

Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology DIGITAL SAKSHARTA ABHIYAN (DISHA) OR NATIONAL DIGITAL LITERACY MISSION (NDLM)

- **National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM)** initiated with the vision to make at least one person in every family digitally literate with digital literacy skills by 2020.

- **Target is to provide digital literacy** to 6 crore rural households. The outlay for this project is Rs.2,351.38 crore to usher in digital literacy in rural India by March,.2019.

- **· 2 lakh 50 thousands** gram panchayats to be connected with WiFi, Hotspot enabled broadband connection. The target for National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) was to train 10.00 Lakh candidates, which was achieved in June 2016.

- **The target for Digital SakshartaAbhiyan (DISHA)** was 42.50 Lakh Candidates which has been achieved in December 2016. Under Pradhan Mantri Digital SakshartaAbhiyan, target is to make 6 crore adults digitally literate in two years.

AADHAR

- · **Aadhaar enrolment has increased** to 120.7 Crore (As on 31 march 2018) from 63.22 cr (as on 31stMay, 2014) Nearly 100% of the adult (18+years) population has Aadhaar (as on 31st March, 2018) from 62% (as on 31st May, 2014).

- **Number of unique bank accounts linked** with Aadhaar has increased to 59.15 cr (as on 31st March, 2018) from less than 7 cr (as on 31st May, 2014). (Data needs updation) Since September, 2016 58.3 Crore mobile SIM cards have been issued using Aadhaar eKYC.

- **125 Banks have joined Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS)**, leading to an increase in AEPS transactions from just 0.46 Crore on 31st May, 2014 to 141.16 Crore on 31st March, 2018.

- **Aadhaar enrolment trend during March,** 2014 to May, 2014 was about 3-4 lakh per day and about 5-6 lakh per day till October 2016. Since Demonetization, the Aadhaar enrolment/ Update requests are in the range of 3-4 lakh per day. More than 1 cr Income Tax Payee have linked their Aadhaar with PAN (Data needs updation)

- **Approximately 70% people are applying** for passport using Aadhaar. Jeevan Pramaan: It is an Aadhaar based platform for biometric authentication of the pensioners and senior citizens. Since its launch on 10 November 2014, over 150.15 lakh pensioners have registered on the portal till date, which was 16.54 lakh in 2016. As per the latest data available around 3.87 Aadhaar based PoS terminals have been introduced

- **DIGIDHAN MISSION: Dedicated mission** under the ministry of Electronics & IT was established to achieve the target of 2500 crore digital payment transactions in FY 2017-18 through digital payment modes including UPI, USSD, IMPS, Aadhar Pay and Debit cards.

COMMON SERVICE CENTRES:

- · **As on December 2017**, around 2.92 lakh CSCs are active and offering digital services like Aadhaar enrolment, Ticket booking, of utilities and other e Governance services to citizens from 2.15 Lakh Gram Panchayats, which was only 2.29 Lakh 2016.

- · **This has developed digital** entrepreneurs among poor, marginalised, Dalits and women of India.

- · **More than 52,000 women** are working in these Centres that provide digital services like ticket booking, tele medicines, Jan Aushadhi, Aadhaar service to people.

- **Electronics Manufacturing** Electronics Development Fund created to support venture capital funds for start-ups. For creating an eco-system to make India a global hub for electronics manufacturinga provision of Rs 745 crores in 2017-18 in incentive schemes like M-SIPS and EDF.

Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

- **Context:** The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha on September 22, 2018.

- **About Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha:** The organisation was established by Annie Besant in 1918 with support from Mahatma Gandhi, who became the founder president of the Sabha, who held the post till his death. In 1964, the institution was recognised by the Indian Government as one of the Institutes of National Importance.

- **It was established** to propagate the study of Hindi in the then Madras Presidency and princely states of Banganapalle, Cochin, Hyderabad, Mysore, Pudukkottai, Sanduru and Travancore. The first Hindi class was taken by Gandhi's son Devdas Gandhi.

Ayushman Bharat

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently rolled out the Centre's flagship scheme — Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan, also known as Ayushman Bharat or the National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).

- **Significance of the project:** This is the world's largest health scheme which will serve a population that equals 27-28 European countries. The beneficiaries are almost equal to the population of Canada, Mexico and US put together. Meant to help the poor and the economically deprived, the scheme will be available for 10.74 crore beneficiary families and about 50 crore Indian citizens.

- **Ayushman Bharat:** Ayushman Bharat is the National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (around 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to 5 lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes –Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

- **Highlights of the scheme:** Coverage: The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.

- **Target:** The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.

- **Role of state governments**: State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.

- **Council:** For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.

- **Who is eligible?** It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database. The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucharoof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour.

- **Also, automatically included families** in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour. For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme.

- **Why Ayushman Bharat?** According to health ministry officials, the 71st round of National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) revealed that 85.9% of rural households and 82% of urban households have no access to healthcare insurance/assurance. More than 24% households in rural India and 18 per cent population in the urban area have met their healthcare expenses through some sort of borrowing. The Ayushman Bharat intends to change this status quo.

Country Partnership Framework

- **Significance:** The CPF aims to support India's transition to a higher middle-income country by addressing some of its key development priorities — resource efficient and inclusive growth, job creation and building its human capital.

- **The India CPF** represents the largest country programme of the WBG, reflecting the strong collaboration between India and the Group's institutions — The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). The WBG expects to deliver $25-30 billion during this CPF period, ending in FY22.

- **Potential:** With a fast growing economy, global stature, and its unique experience of lifting the highest number of poor out of poverty in the past decades, India is well-positioned to become a high middle-income country by 2030.

- **Need of the hour:** The future of India lies in the States of India. The country's transition to high middle-income status will be determined in large part by the effectiveness of India's federal compact. In this context, an important focus of the CPF will be to deepen engagement with India's States and invest in the institutions and capabilities of the states and local governments to address their development priorities.

- **What is Country Partnership Framework (CPF)?** The World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aims to make our country-driven model more systematic, evidence-based, selective, and focused on the Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing shared prosperity in a sustainable manner. The CPF replaces the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). Used in conjunction with a Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD), the CPF guides the World Bank Group's (WBG) support to a member country.

- **A Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD)** informs each new CPF. The aim of the SCD is to identify the most important challenges and opportunities a country faces in advancing towards the twin goals. This is derived from a thorough analysis, and informed by consultations with a range of stakeholders.

- **Way ahead:** The WBG will focus on three broad areas under the new CPF: promoting a resource efficient growth path, particularly in the use of land and water, to remain sustainable; enhancing competitiveness and enabling job creation; and investing in human capital — in health, education, skills — to improve quality and efficiency of service delivery.

- **Within these**, some areas of deeper WBG's engagement will include addressing the challenge of air pollution, facilitating jobs for women, increasing the resilience of the financial sector and investing in early years of children's development. Across the sectors, the WBG will invest in harnessing the impact of new technology.

Total expense ratio

- **What is total expense ratio and why is it important for investing in mutual funds?** Mutual funds are investments where an investor entrusts his/her money with an investment manager (of an asset management company) to manage the money smartly and efficiently. This money management comes at a cost, which is usually charged as a percentage of the investment.

- **The official regulator** of mutual funds has laid down rules on how much an asset management company can charge an investor to manage their funds. For an investor this is important because it is a charge (called total expense ratio or TER in short) levied on their investment, and the money they get back from their investment is reduced by this figure.

- **So, for an investor**, TER is an important number to focus on since it has a direct impact on their returns. However, it is not the only number to look at and investors should evaluate funds based on various parameters such as consistency of performance and risk levels.

- **What are the changes made by SEBI now to TER?** SEBI has, across the board, lowered the TER that a fund house can charge its investors. The reduction is higher for larger funds and lower for smaller funds — larger and smaller being a measure of how much money a fund manages.

NASA's MAVEN spacecraft

- **MAVEN completed its primary mission** in November 2015 and has been operating in an extended mission since that time, continuing its investigation of Mars' upper atmosphere and exploring additional opportunities for science that the new relay orbit will bring.

- **Accomplishments:** The MAVEN mission was launched on November 18, 2013, and went into orbit around Mars on September 21, 2014. During its time at Mars, the spacecraft has acquired compelling evidence that the loss of atmosphere to space has been a major driver of climate change on Mars.

- **It also discovered** two new types of Martian auroras — diffuse aurora and proton aurora. Neither type has a direct connection to the local or global magnetic field or to magnetic cusps, as auroras do on Earth. MAVEN has demonstrated that the majority of the carbon dioxide (CO_2) on the planet has been lost to space and that there is not enough left to terraform the planet by warming it, even if the CO_2 could be released and put back into the atmosphere.

- **About MAVEN mission:** Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) mission was developed by NASA to study the Martian atmosphere while orbiting Mars. MAVEN was launched aboard an Atlas V launch vehicle. Mission goals include determining how the planet's atmosphere and water, presumed to have once been substantial, were lost over time.

- **MAVEN mission has four primary scientific objectives:** Determine the role that loss of volatiles to space from the Martian atmosphere has played through time. Determine the current state of the upper atmosphere, ionosphere, and interactions with the solar wind.

- **Determine the current rates** of escape of neutral gases and ions to space and the processes controlling them. Determine the ratios of stable isotopes in the Martian atmosphere.

Scientists grow human oesophagus in lab

- **The human oesophageal** tissue was grown entirely from pluripotent stem cells (PSCs), which can form any tissue type in the body.

- **Significance:** The research may lead to personalised diagnostic methods and focused in part on developing regenerative tissue therapies to treat or cure GI disorders. In addition to being a new model to study birth defects like esophageal atresia, the organoids can be used to study diseases like eosinophilic esophagitis and Barrett's metaplasia, or to bioengineer genetically matched esophageal tissue for individual patients.

- **What is Oesophagus?** The oesophagus is a muscular tube that actively passes food from the mouth to the stomach. It is also called as gastro-intestinal tract (GI tract or gullet or food pipe). There are a number of lymph nodes close to the oesophagus.

- **The oesophagus has four layers:** The mucosa – the inner layer, which is moist to help food pass smoothly into the stomach.

- **The submucosa** – this contains glands that produce mucus (phlegm), which keeps the oesophagus moist. The muscularis – the muscle layer, which pushes food down to the stomach. The adventitia – the outer layer, which attaches the oesophagus to nearby parts of the body.

- **Diseases associated:** The organ can be affected by congenital diseases, such as oesophageal atresia — a narrowing or malformation of the oesophagus caused by genetic mutations.

- **There are several diseases** that can afflict people later in life. Some include oesophageal cancer, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or a rare ailment called achalasia — a disease affecting the muscles of the lower oesophagus that prevents contraction of the organ and the passage of food.

Eco-sensitive area (ESA)

- **Karnataka** is set to reject the notification as "it will adversely affect the state's economy." Karnataka is not in favour of declaring the Western Ghats as an ESA.

- **What's the issue?** A draft notification regarding ecologically sensitive areas, issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF), has been delayed for over a year due to on-going negotiations between the Centre and the states. The initial draft, in March 2014, which was to be finalised in 545 days or by September 2015, has been repeatedly pushed.

- **The notice earmarked 60,000 square** kilometres, or 37 per cent of the Ghats, as ecologically sensitive. However, it was protested by the states, especially Kerala, as ESAs restrict developmental activity. The Centre has since decided to accept recommendations from each state government.

- **What are ESAs?** An ecologically sensitive area is one that is protected by the government given the sheer number of species, plants and animals endemic to the region. According to the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the government can prohibit industrial operations such as mining, sand quarrying and building thermal power plants in sensitive areas.

- **The definition** offered by the MoEF: "An ecological sensitive area is a bio-climatic unit (as demarcated by entire landscapes) in the Western Ghats wherein human impacts have locally caused irreversible changes in the structure of biological communities (as evident in number/ composition of species and their relative abundances) and their natural habitats."

- **To categorise** an area as ecologically sensitive, the government looks at topography, climate and rainfall, land use and land cover, roads and settlements, human population, biodiversity corridors and data of plants and animal species.

- **The Kasturirangan committee report:** The MoEF notification is based on findings of a High-Level Working Group, also known as the Kasturirangan committee. The government-appointed committee had said that the natural landscape of the Ghats constitutes only 41 per cent, or which 90 percent or 60,000 square kilometres were identified as ecologically sensitive.

- **The committee** suggested phasing out current mining projects within five years, or when mining leases were about to expire. It recommended that infrastructure and development projects be subject to environmental clearance, and that villages in ESA be involved in decision making regarding future projects. The notification was deemed too environmentally friendly by stakeholder states.

- **Significance of Western Ghats:** The Western Ghats was included as a 'World Natural Heritage Site' by UNESCO in 2012. According to the organisation, the Ghats, which are older than the Himalayas, are home to at least 325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species. It has been recognised as one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity.

What caused the floods in Kerala?

- **Context:** A recent study has found that a combination of four factors led to extreme flooding across Kerala this year. Union government had declared the Kerala floods a "calamity of severe nature".

- **The four factors that led to the disaster:** Above normal seasonal (May-August) rainfall: The summer monsoon rainfall in Kerala from May to August this year was 2,290 mm, which was 53% above normal. The average rainfall during the summer monsoon period (June-September) is about 1,619 mm. This makes 2018 Kerala's third wettest year in the last 118 years (1901-2018); 1924 and 1961 were the wettest years with about 3,600 mm of annual rainfall.

- **Extreme** rainfall events occurring almost across the State during the season: Till August 21, the State witnessed few extreme rainfall events covering almost the entire State. These extreme rainfall events have very low probability of recurrence in any given year.

- **Over 90% reservoir** storage even before the onset of extreme rainfall events: Kerala received 1634.5 mm rainfall during the period May 1 to August 7, which is more than the average rainfall (1619.37 mm) during the summer monsoon period (June-September). As a result, six of the seven major reservoirs in the State had over 90% storage before August 8, well before Kerala received the unprecedented extreme rainfall events.

- **Unprecedented extreme rainfall** in the catchment areas of major reservoirs in the State: The catchment areas of major reservoirs in the State received extreme rainfall never before witnessed in the State. The role of other factors such as changes in how infrastructure has grown at the expense of vegetation and drainage remains to be studied.

Neelakurinji plants:

- **Context:** Tamil Nadu government has announced a novel scheme for the protection of the exotic Neela kurinji (Strobilanthus kunthianus) plants that flower only once in 12 years.

- **Neelakurinji:** Kurinji or Neelakurinji (Strobilanthes kunthianus) is a shrub that is found in the shola forests of the Western Ghats in South India. Nilgiri Hills, which literally means the blue mountains, got their name from the purplish blue flowers of Neelakurinji that blossoms only once in 12 years.

- **Some Kurinji** flowers bloom once every seven years, and then die. Their seeds subsequently sprout and continue the cycle of life and death. The Paliyan tribal people living in Tamil Nadu used it as a reference to calculate their age.

Sikkim's first-ever airport inaugurated:

- **Sikkim's first-ever airport** was recently inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra at Pakyong. The airport was constructed by the Airports Authority of India.

- **Significance:** The Pakyong Airport, the country has hit a century of airports. Until now, Sikkim was the only state in India remaining without a functional airport. The development not only eases connectivity to the Himalayan state but also brings it on the air-map of the world.

- **The airport's location** makes it strategically relevant from the country's security point of view. The Indian Air Force (IAF) will find this airport convenient for the landing and taking off of its aircrafts. The airport is not only India's 100th functional airport but also one of the country's five highest airports.

Ministry of Railways Safety Reigns Supreme

- ● **Best ever safety record in 2017-18**: Less than 100 accidents recorded in a year. 62% reduction in consequential train accidents from 118 in 2013-14 to 73 in 2017-18 ● 50% increase in track renewal from 2,926 kms in 2013-14 to 4,405 kms in 2017-18 ● 1.1 lakh safety posts being filled-up through recruitment ● 5,469 Unmanned Level Crossings eliminated in the last four years. Average pace of elimination is 20% more than that of 2009-14. ● All unmanned Level crossings on Broad Gauge routes targeted for elimination by 2020 ● Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) fund of Rs. 1 Lakh Cr to be spent on safety over five years.

Quantum Leap in Capital Expenditure

- ● **Capital expenditure** from April-2014 to March 2018 (4 years) at Rs. 3.83 lakh Cr is more than total cumulative investment in Railways till March 2014 at Rs. 3.25 lakh Cr Capacity Enhancement: Building Infrastructure For Tomorrow ● Accelerated commissioning of Broad Gauge line: 9,528 kms between April, 2014 to March, 2018 (4 years) vis-à-vis 7,600 kms during 2009-14

North-East Connectivity

- ● **North East is fully integrated with rest of India with the entire network converted to Broad Gauge** ● Rail connectivity established with states of Meghalaya (Dudhnoi-Mendipathar), Tripura (Kumarghat-Agartala) and Mizoram (Kathakal-Bhairabi) ● Train connectivity established for Itanagar and Silchar to Delhi 5) Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Rail: First Ever Bullet Train in India ● High Speed of the train will reduce travel time from approx. 8 hrs to 2 hrs ● Enhanced safety through Japanese Shinkansen technology. ● Generate employment for about 20,000 workers during the construction phase

Dedicated Freight Corridors: Unlocking Indian Economy

- ● **Commissioning of Western and Eastern DFCs (2,822 Kms) in phases by 2019-20** ● Lead to reduction in freight travel time, transportation cost and de-congestion in existing network ● Bring economic development and job creation by connecting factories and farms to ports 7) Freight: Moving India's Economy ● Highest ever freight loading in 2017-18: 1,160 Million Tonnes ● Highest ever freight earnings of Rs. 1.17 Lakh Cr in 2017-18 (13% more than last year)

Make In India Initiatives

- ● **The first locomotive from Electric Locomotive Factory (ELF), Madhepura has been flagged off by Prime Minister** ● First diesel locomotive received at GE factory in Marhowrah, Bihar and is under trial 9) Superlative High Speed Wi-Fi Service At Stations ● More than 675 railway stations already provided with wi-fi ● All stations will be covered by March 2019

Swachhata Hi Seva

- **More than 1,25,000 bio-toilets fitted over 34,400 coaches. All trains to run with bio-toilets by March 2019** LED Lights: Boosting Energy Efficiency All railway stations have been provided with LED lights. All buildings will be covered by June 2018 5000 coaches have been fitted with LED lights. All coaches will be covered by March 2019 LED lights will save more than Rs.250 Cr annually Station Redevelopment: A Leap Into The Future 600 Stations to be developed with world class facilities Redevelopment of Habibganj station, Madhya Pradesh and Gandhinagar station to be completed by December, 2018

Atithi Devo Bhava

- **Atithi Devo Bhava: Enhancing Passenger Convenience** Capacity of e-ticketing increased from 2,000 tickets per minute to 15,000 tickets per minute Cancellation and refund of tickets made easier

New Modern Trains/Coaches: A Journey To Remember

- ● **More than 700 Deen Dayalu** coaches produced with extra safety and modern features

- ● **13 Long distance** unreserved Antyodaya LHB trains with general second class coaches introduced

- ● **Tejas train** between Mumbai to Goa started with speed potential of 200 kmph and ultra modern features

- ● **New Delhi-Varanasi** Mahamana Express was started ● 19 Humsafar trains with additional amenities in the coaches introduced

Digital India Digital Rail

- ● **Point Of Sale** (POS) machines n installed at more than 4,000 locations of Indian Railways

Major Thrust To Suburban Networks

- ● **Development of Bengaluru** Suburban System: Rs. 17,000 Cr in Budget 2018-19

- ● **Upgradation of Mumbai** Suburban System: Rs. 51,000 Cr project in Budget 2018-19

Women empowerment

- **17) Women empowerment:** First all women station operationalized at Matunga station in Mumbai and subsequently extended to 12 stations across the country

Change in Procurement Practices

- **18) Change in Procurement Practices** ● Policy for e-reverse auction for all tenders > Rs 10 Cr and works tender > Rs 50 Cr formulated ● Mandatory procurement of common use goods/services through Government e-Market

- **19) India's First National Rail & Transportation University in Vadodara** ● A not-for-profit company under Section 8 of the Companies Act formed ● Create a resource pool of skilled manpower

- **20) Making India proud in Sports** ● Best ever performance over the last 40 years with 39 podium finishes in 56 National Championship

- ● **In Commonwealth Games** -2018, 10 Gold Medals out of 26 Gold won by India have been won by Railways' Sportspersons.

Ministry of Civil Aviation AIRPORTS

- · **UDAN: Udey Desh ka Aam Nagrik launched on 21 October 2016** · Flight Journey become easier and Cheap

- · **Airports at Bhopal** , Indore and Raipur to be declared international airports.

- · **Major Airports** i.e IGI Delhi, Kochi and Hyderabad powered by solar energy · New Civil Aviation Policy announced

UPSC=Fever

Decriminalisation of politics

- **Background:** A bunch of pleas had been filed raising questions whether lawmakers, who face criminal trial, can be disqualified from fighting elections at the stage of framing of charges against them.

- **What did the court say?** The court observed that it cannot enter the legislative arena to provide disqualification of candidates, who are facing serious criminal cases against them. However, it asked the candidates to put in bold letter her/his criminal antecedents in the required affidavit.

- **The SC said each political party** will put on its website the criminal antecedents of each of its candidates so as to allow the voters to make an informed choice.

- **What does the RPA say?** Currently, under the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act, lawmakers cannot contest elections only after their conviction in a criminal case.

- **Section 8** of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1951 disqualifies a person convicted with a sentence of two years or more from contesting elections. But those under trial continued to be eligible to contest elections. The Lily Thomas case (2013), however, ended this unfair advantage.

Criminals in Politics:

- **Protecting** the parliamentary system from criminalisation has been the intention of the law from the beginning.

- **Efforts by SC in this regard:** The SC has repeatedly expressed concern about the purity of legislatures. In 2002, it made it obligatory for all candidates to file an affidavit before the returning officer, disclosing criminal cases pending against them. The famous order to introduce NOTA was intended to make political parties think before giving tickets to the tainted.

- **In its landmark judgment** of March 2014, the SC accepted the urgent need for cleansing politics of criminalisation and directed all subordinate courts to decide on cases involving legislators within a year, or give reasons for not doing so to the chief justice of the high court.

- **The trend:** According to the ADR's analysis of EC data, 187 MPs in the current Lok Sabha face criminal charges (that is, 34.4 per cent). Of them, 113 face serious criminal charges. The number has gone up from 162 (76 serious) charges in 2009 and 128 (58 serious) in 2004.

- **Main reasons for Criminalization:** Corruption Vote bank. Lack of governance.

- **What is the way out? There are three possible options.** One, political parties should themselves refuse tickets to the tainted. Two, the RP Act should be amended to debar persons against whom cases of a heinous nature are pending from contesting elections. Three, fast-track courts should decide the cases of tainted legislators quickly.

- **Suggested measure to curb criminalization of politics:** Bringing greater transparency in campaign financing is going to make it less attractive for political parties to involve gangsters. The Election Commission of India (ECI) should have the power to audit the financial accounts of political parties, or political parties' finances should be brought under the right to information (RTI) law. Broader governance will have to improve for voters to reduce the reliance on criminal politicians.

- **Fast-track courts** are necessary because politicians are able to delay the judicial process and serve for decades before prosecution. The Election Commission must take adequate measures to break the nexus between the criminals and the politicians. The forms prescribed by the Election Commission for candidates disclosing their convictions, cases pending in courts and so on in their nomination papers is a step in the right direction if it applied properly.

- **Way ahead:** Corruption and criminalisation of politics is hitting at the roots of democracy. Therefore, Parliament must take steps urgently to curb this menace. Candidates and political parties must give wide publicity to criminal cases pending against her/him in the local media, both print and electronic, after s/he files nomination to contest elections.

Publishing poll candidate's propaganda is paid news

- **The EC has asked** the court to declare whether it amounts to "paid news" if widely circulated daily newspapers cover statements issued by, and in the name of, a candidate.

- **Concerns:** Such news are not only laudatory of his or her record and achievements but also are a direct appeal to voters by the candidate. Therefore, politicians cannot say that it is part of their fundamental right to free speech to spew out "motivated propaganda".

- **If such motivated propaganda** is allowed in the name of free speech during the election period, candidates with a strong network of connections will exploit their sphere of influence in society. This will have the unequal advantage of encashing such silent services.

- **Background: The commission has moved the court in appeal against a decision of the Delhi High Court to set aside the disqualification of a MP in Madhya Pradesh.** ECI's National Level Committee on Paid News found that five newspapers, with a wide circulation, had published 42 news items that were biased and one-sided and aimed at furthering the prospects of the leader. Some of the reports were advertisements in favour of him. The committee concluded that the items fitted the definition of "paid news".

- **Delhi HC order and why was it challenged?** The Delhi HC order had not only overturned the EC's order on disqualification, but it also stated that the Commission's remit is limited to election expenditure incurred by candidates and not content of speech. While the EC does not usually move court on its own, this was seen as a fit case as it was felt that the Delhi HC order had dealt a major blow to the fight against paid news. It was also felt that unless the legal position on the issue was corrected, the EC's role and power to check paid news in elections will be irreparably undermined. Legal advice taken also weighed in favour of moving the Supreme Court.

- **Paid news menace:** Over 600 paid news complaints were forwarded by EC to Press Council of India with reference to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the government had informed Parliament. EC has repeatedly been asking the law ministry to treat paid news as a cognisable offence and the 2015 Law Commission reports call for amendments in laws to check the menace. The UPA government had also set up a Group of ministers to examine the issue.

- **Need of the hour:** The ECI has written to the Union government before, suggesting that paid news be made an electoral offence under the RPA. A Law Commission report from 2015 also recommends amending the RPA to this effect.

Severe acute malnutrition

- **Guidelines: Severely malnourished** children must be fed freshly cooked food prepared from locally available cereals, pulses and vegetables. This is to be distributed by anganwadi centres, as part of the country's first-ever guidelines for nutritional management of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

- **The guidelines outline the role of anganwadi workers and auxillary nurse midwives (ANMs)** in identifying severely wasted children. According to the recommendations, anganwadi workers have to provide modified morning snacks, hot cooked meals and take home ration for SAM children.

- **They have to segregate those with oedema** or medical complications and sending them to the nearest health facility or nutrition rehabilitation centres. The remaining children are enrolled into "community based management". This includes provision of nutrition, continuous monitoring of growth, administration of antibiotics and micro-nutrients as well as counselling sessions and imparting of nutrition and health education.

- **The morning snacks and hot-cooked meals**, which are served at anganwadis to children between the age of three to six years, should be "prepared freshly and served at the centralised kitchen/ anganwadi centres. Locally available cereals, pulses, green leafy vegetables and tubers, vitamin C rich fruits, as well as fresh milk and 3-4 eggs every week" have also been prescribed.

- **Importantly**, the government has also revised the method to be used to measure wasting and advised calculating weight based on the height of children instead of the mid-upper arm circumference.

- **What necessitated this?** The government had, till now, only put in place guidelines for the hospitalization of severely wasted children who develop medical complications.

- **What is severe acute malnutrition?** Severe acute malnutrition is the most extreme and visible form of undernutrition. Its face is a child – frail and skeletal – who requires urgent treatment to survive.

- **Children with severe acute malnutrition** have very low weight for their height and severe muscle wasting. They may also have nutritional oedema – characterized by swollen feet, face and limbs. About two thirds of these children live in Asia and almost one third live in Africa. Severe acute malnutrition is a major cause of death in children under 5, and its prevention and treatment are critical to child survival and development.

- **Across the globe, an estimated 16 million** children under the age of 5 are affected by severe acute malnutrition. This number is staggering – most importantly, because children with severe acute malnutrition are nine times more likely to die than well-nourished children. These deaths are the direct result of malnutrition itself, as well as the indirect result of childhood illnesses like diarrhoea and pneumonia that malnourished children are too weak to survive.

- **Severe acute malnutrition** can increase dramatically in emergencies. But despite what we see in the headlines, the majority of cases occur in developing countries not affected by emergencies. These settings are plagued by chronic poverty, lack of education, poor hygiene, limited access to food and poor diets. The result is significant barriers to sustainable development in these nations.

Prison reforms

- **Terms of reference:** The committee's duties will include looking into the problems of jails across the country including overcrowding in prisons, issue of human rights of prisoners and issues concerning women prisoners languishing in cells for years.

- **After studying the problems**, the committee would be required to suggest measures to deal with them.

- **Background:** The Supreme Court had said on August 8, 2018 that it would constitute a committee under the chairmanship of its retired judge to look into the problems in jails, on a day-to-day basis and suggest measures to tackle the problems. The SC had expressed its displeasure saying that the government had collected a huge amount under the orders of the apex court but the funds were not being utilised properly.

- **Need for reforms:** NHRC figures show that prisoners cut off from family and friends had a 50% more chance of committing suicide than those outside. The average suicide rate among the general public for this period is 11 (per 100,000) whereas the average suicide rate in prison is 16.9 (per 100,000). In other words, the average suicide rate in prisons is over 50% more than in normal conditions.

- **Indian prisons face three long-standing** structural constraints: overcrowding, thanks to a high percentage of undertrials in the prison population, understaffing and underfunding. The inevitable outcome is sub-human living conditions, poor hygiene, and violent clashes between the inmates and jail authorities.

- **Besides, while 33% of the total** requirement of prison officials still lies vacant, almost 36% of vacancy for supervising officers is still unfulfilled. In the absence of adequate prison staff, overcrowding of prisons leads to rampant violence and other criminal activities inside the jails.

- **Way ahead: Indian jails have often been dubbed** as a university for grooming criminals due to pathetic and inhumane conditions. In the absence of a robust Whistleblower Protection Act and structural changes to address the issues of overcrowding and understaffing, India's prisons will continue to be heaven for politically connected criminals and hell for socio-economically disadvantaged undertrials, some regular media uproars notwithstanding.

- **Fundamental rights** of prisoners cannot be placed in the back-burner and the Centre and the states need to be more pro-active in sensitising staff about the need to treat prisoners as humanely as possible.

National e-Vidhan Application

- **About NeVA:** NeVA is a member-centric, decentralized digital application that makes information available on digital platform about day to day functioning of Legislative Houses covering various businesses of the Houses. The application would host a secure page for each Member of the House for submitting Questions & other Notices.

- **The mNeVA (NeVA-mobile app)** is a device neutral and user friendly app that has made information on conduct of business in Legislatures accessible anytime, anywhere to everyone.

- **It is a work-flow based** app deployed in Cloud (Meghraj) which helps the Chair of the House to conduct the proceedings of the House smoothly and the members to carry out their duties in the House efficiently.

- **NeVA has made live** for Rajya Sabha in respect of Monsoon Session 2018 and information in respect of Lok Sabha is being updated.

- **e-Vidhan Project:** e-Vidhan is a Mission Mode Project to digitize and make the functioning of State Legislatures paperless. This is part of Digital India programme. It is to be used by the Legislatures as well as all the Government Departments.

Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) Mission

- **About Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) mission:** PDV mission is for engaging the targets in the exo-atmosphere region at an altitude above 50 km of the earth's atmosphere DRDO. The PDV is slated to replace the existing Prithvi Air Defense (PAD)/Pradyumna Ballistic Missile Interceptor, which has a maximum interception altitude of 80 kilometers.

- **The new two-stage solid-fueled PDV** interceptor is fitted with an Imaging Infrared (IIR) seeker, developed by DRDO, to distinguish between incoming warheads and decoys.

- **It is guided by high-accuracy** Inertial Navigation System (INS) supported by Redundant Micro Navigation System for estimating point of interception.

World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme

- **The government of Nepal** recently announced that there are now an estimated 235 wild tigers in the nation, nearly double the number from around 121 in 2009.

- **Significance:** The success of Nepal in doubling tiger numbers has been largely attributed to the country's political commitment and the adoption of innovative tools and approaches towards tiger conservation. Nepal was the first country to achieve global standards in managing tiger conservation areas, an accreditation scheme governed by the Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS).

- **About 'Tx2' programme:** The World Wildlife Foundation had launched its ambitious TX2 programme at the St Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010. The programme aims to double the world tiger population by 2022, which is the year of the tiger in the Chinese calendar.

- **WHAT IS WWF'S ROLE?** WWF remains a major driving force behind Tx2. It aims at: Driving political momentum to ensure tigers remain a top priority for world leaders. Professionalising wildlife protection by training rangers, developing conservation standards (CA|TS) and technology (SMART) to achieve Zero Poaching.

- **Tackling the illegal wildlife** trade through our partnership with TRAFFIC. Focusing efforts in key tiger landscapes. Ensuring there is space for both tigers and people in the future.

- **WHO ARE THE TIGER RANGE COUNTRIES?** Wild tigers are found in a variety of habitats across Asia. There are currently 13 tiger range countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Ministry of Coal

- **COAL PRODUCTION:** · Coal Production increased from 565.77MT in 2013-14 to 662.79MT in 2016-17. · CIL has increased its production from 462.41 MT in 2013-2014 to 554.14 MT in 2016-17. The increase of 91.73 MT in actual production achieved by CIL in the last three years took more than six years to achieve before 2013-14.

- **COAL BLOCK ALLOCATION-** · 89 Coal Mines successfully allocated- 31 through e-auction and 58 to Government Companies. · 50 coal mines allocated to the regulated sector i.e. power, 26 coal mines to the non -regulated sector (NRS) i.e. iron & steel, cement and captive power as well as 13 coal mines for sale of coal.

- · **Estimated Proceeds from auction and allotment: Rs. 3.20lakh crores+** · Status: Rs. 4577.11/ crores generated form coal mines on account of auction/allotment proceeds from allocation of mines. 40.57 MT coal has already been produced till January 2018 from the operational coal mines after allocation.

- **Power Sector Linkage Policy- SHAKTI (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala Transparently in India)** New More Transparent Coal Allocation Policy for Power Sector, 2017- Shakti put in place from 22.05.2017.

- **Coal Projects Monitoring Portal (e-CPMP)** Set up in the Coal Ministry to fast track clearances and pending issues of coal projects at State Government as well as Central Ministries. It has facilitated the resolution of all pending issues in 76 coal projects worth Rs. 52,600 crores till date.

- **Mining Surveillance System (MSS):** Satellite- based monitoring system to establish a regime of responsive mineral administration, through public participation, by curbing instances of illegal mining activity through automatic remote sensing detection technology.

- **Online Coal Clearances System:** Coal Allocation Monitoring System (CAMS to monitor the allocation of coal by Coal India Limited (CIL) to states, States to State Nominated Agencies (SNA) and SNA to consumers in a transparent manner.

- **Contract Labour Payment Management System:** Contract Labour Payment Management System, also known as CLIP has been launched on 4th May 2016. CLIP portal has been adopted by CIL and all its subsidiaries.

The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley launched here today a web portal www.psbloansin59minutes.com , a transformative initiative in MSME credit space, which will enable in principle approval for MSME loans up to Rs. 1 crore within 59 minutes from SIDBI and 5 Public Sector Banks (PSBs)

- **The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley launched here today** a transformative initiative in MSME credit space. The web portal www.psbloansin59minutes.com will enable in principle approval for MSME loans up to Rs. 1 crore within 59 minutes from SIDBI and 5 Public Sector Banks (PSBs). It is a strategic initiative of SIBDI led PSB consortium incubated under the aegis of Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance. The Portal sets a new benchmark in loan processing and reduces the turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes. Subsequent to this in principle approval, the loan will be disbursed in 7-8 working days.

- **A first in MSME banking credit space, www.psbloansin59minutes.com** is one of its kind platform in MSME segment which integrates advanced fintech to ensure seamless loan approval and management. The loans are undertaken without human intervention till sanction and or disbursement stage. A User Friendly Platform has been built where MSME borrower is not required to submit any physical document for in-principle approval. The solution uses sophisticated algorithms to read and analyse data points from various sources such as IT returns, GST data, bank statements, MCA21 etc. in less than an hour while capturing the applicants basic details using Smart analytics from available documents. The system simplifies the decision making process for a loan officer as the final output provides a summary of credit, valuation and verification on a user-friendly dashboard in real time.

- **The key features of the contactless platform include:**

- **Majority stake of SIDBI & big 5 PSBs**- SBI, Bank of Baroda, PNB, Vijaya and Indian Bank.

- **A first for MSME borrowers-Connect** with multiple banks without visiting the branch.

- **Advanced Digital Platform for MSME** Financing with Services Driven Architecture and highest level of Information Security.

- **Only Platform** in the market with a Banker Interface which covers the Branch Level integrations (with maker-checker-approver) in tune with current systems of PSBs.

- **Only Platform** that enables Bankers to create Loan Products in line with the Scoring models & assessment methods within their approved credit policy.

- **Only Platform that has an integrated GST**, ITR, Bank Statement Analyzer, Fraud Check and Bureau Check as well as host of other features which at present is not available with any other player in the market.

- **Only Platform that has been integrated with CGTMSE for checking the eligibility of Borrowers**. MSME borrower gets loan up to Rs.2 crore without any collateral, which is major relief for MSME borrower.

National Sports Awards 2018 and National Adventure Awards 2017 conferred

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S. No.	Name of the Sportsperson	Discipline
1.	Ms. S. MirabaiChanu	Weightlifting
2.	Shri ViratKohli	Cricket

Following sportspersons were conferred with Dronacharya Awards for the year 2018:

S. No.	Name of the Coach	Discipline
1.	Subedar ChenandaAchaiah Kuttappa	Boxing
2.	Shri Vijay Sharma	Weightlifting
3.	Shri A. Srinivasa Rao	Table Tennis
4.	Shri Sukhdev Singh Pannu	Athletics
5.	Shri Clarence Lobo	Hockey (Life Time)
6.	Shri Tarak Sinha	Cricket (Life Time)
7.	Shri Jiwan Kumar Sharma	Judo (Life Time)
8.	Shri V.R. Beedu	Athletics (Life Time)

Following sportspersons were conferred with Arjuna Awards for the year 2018:

S. No.	Name of the Sportsperson	Discipline
1.	Shri Neeraj Chopra	Athletics
2.	NaibSubedarJinson Johnson	Athletics

3.	Ms. Hima Das	Athletics
4.	Ms. NelakurthiSikki Reddy	Badminton
5.	Subedar Satish Kumar	Boxing
6.	Ms. SmritiMandhana*	Cricket
7.	Shri Shubhankar Sharma	Golf
8.	Shri Manpreet Singh	Hockey
9.	Ms. Savita	Hockey
10.	Col. Ravi Rathore	Polo
11.	Ms. RahiSarnobat	Shooting
12.	Shri Ankur Mittal	Shooting
13.	Ms. Shreyasi Singh	Shooting
14.	Ms. ManikaBatra	Table Tennis
15.	Shri G. Sathiyan	Table Tennis
16.	Shri Rohan Bopanna*	Tennis
17.	Shri Sumit	Wrestling
18.	Ms. Pooja Kadian	Wushu
19.	Shri AnkurDhama	Para-Athletics
20.	Shri Manoj Sarkar	Para-Badminton

*Players could not be present

Following sportspersons were conferred with Dhyan Chand Awards for the year 2018.

S. No.	Name of the Sportsperson	Discipline
1.	Shri Satyadev Prasad	Archery
2.	Shri Bharat Kumar Chetri	Hockey

3.	Ms. Bobby Aloysius	Athletics
4.	Shri ChougaleDaduDattatray	Wrestling

Following entities were conferred with Rashtriya Khel ProtsahanPuruskar for the year 2018.

S. No.	Category	Name of the entity
1.	Identification and Nurturing of Budding & Young Talent	RashtriyaIspat Nigam Limited
2.	Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility	JSW Sports
3.	Sports for Development	Isha Outreach

Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Awards, 2017 were conferred on the following:

S.No	Name	Category
1	Dr AnshuJamsenpa	Mountaineer
2.	Late Shri Ravi Kumar	Mountaineer
3	Lt Cdr Vartika Joshi	Navy
4	Lt Cdr PratibhaJamwal	Navy
5	Lt Cdr PatarlapalliSwathi	Navy
6	Lt Cdr ShougrakpamVijaya Devi	Navy
7	Lt Cdr AishwaryaBoddapati	Navy
8	Lt Payal Gupta	Navy
9	CaptUditThapar	Skydiver
10	Shri SonamWangyal	Mountaineer (Life time)

UPSC=Fever

Agmark online system is being implemented across the country to conduct quality control functions

- **The processing of Agmark** certification application will be available 24x7

- **Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shri Radha Mohan Singh today launched the online software for Agmark** . On this occasion he said that fulfilling Prime Minister's Digital India dream and following its footsteps, the application processes related to Agmark certification are being done online by the Directorate of Marketing & Inspection (DMI). The process of application will be simple, quick, transparent and 24x7.

- **He informed that the Agmark online system is being implemented across the country to conduct quality control functions** . Through the Agmark online system, certificate of authorisation (domestic), permission of printing press, permission of laboratories (domestic) and services related to laboratory information management system will be provided online.

- **Shri Singh said that the existing procedures for Agmark certification were in physical form and time consuming** . The use of modern technologies by the National Informatics Center has made these processes easy, reliable and cost effective by providing online electronic mode. In the new online application system, there are provisions for online receipt of fees from the applicants. Payment will be received in digital mode through bharatkosh.gov.in website.

- **He concluded by wishing success to Agmark's online software** and said that it has become necessary to explore all possibilities so that maximum benefits from this software program can reach the farmers and packers.

Cabinet approves National Digital Communications Policy-2018

- **The Union Cabinet** , chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approvedthe National Digital Communications Policy-2018 (NDCP-2018) andre-designation of the Telecom Commission as the "Digital Communications Commission".

- **TheNDCP-2018 envisions supporting India's transition to a digitally empowered economy and society by fulfilling** the information and Communications needs of citizens and enterprises by establishment of a ubiquitous, resilient and affordable Digital Communications Infrastructure and Services.

- **The key objectives of the policy are provisioning of Broadband for all; creating 4 Million additional jobs** in the Digital Communications sector; enhancing the contribution of the Digital Communications sector to 8% of India's GDP from ~ 6% in 2017; propelling India to the Top 50 Nations in the ICT Development Index of ITU from 134 in 2017; enhancing India's contribution to Global Value Chains; and ensuring Digital Sovereignty.These objectives are to be achieved by 2022.

- **The policy, inter-alia, aims to provide universal broadband connectivity at 50Mbps to every citizen; provide 1 Gbps connectivity to all Gram Panchayats of India by 2020 and 10 Gbps by 2022** ; ensure connectivity to all uncovered areas; attract investments of USD 100 Billion in the Digital Communications Sector; train1 Million manpower for building New Age Skill; expand IoT ecosystem to 5 Billion connected devices; establish a comprehensive data protection regime for digital communications that safeguards the privacy, autonomy and choice of individuals and facilitates India's effective participation in the global digital economy; and Enforce accountability through appropriate institutional mechanisms to assure citizens of safe and secure digital communications infrastructure and services.

- **The policy further advocates for establishment of a National Digital Gridbycreating a National Fibre Authority** ; establishingCommon Service Ducts and utility corridors in all newcity and highway road projects; creating a collaborative institutional mechanism between Centre, States and Local Bodies for Common Rights of Way,standardization of costs and timelines; removal of barriers to approvals; and facilitating development of Open Access Next Generation Networks.

- **Background:- The present world has entered the era of modern technological advancements in the Telecom Sector such as 5G, IoT, M2M etc** ., a need was being felt to introduce a 'customer focused' and 'application driven' policy for the Indian Telecom Sector which can form the main pillar of Digital India by addressing emerging opportunities for expanding not only the availability of Telecom services but also Telecom based services.

- **Accordingly, the new National Digital Communications Policy -2018** has been formulated, in place of the existing National Telecom Policy-2012, to cater to the modern needs of the digital Communications Sector of India.

Ease of Living index

- **Andhra Pradesh has topped Ease of Living Index** rankings under AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation). It is followed by Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

- **About the Ease of Living index:** The index has been developed to allow city managers to get a grip on the city's baseline and compare its performance across key indicators. The first edition of index released in January 2018 had ranked 111 Indian cities and was topped by Pune.

- **The index covers 116 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities, and cities with population of 1 million plus.** The index captures the quality of life based on the data collected from the urban local bodies on four parameters, which were further broken down into 15 categories.

- **The four parameters include institutional (governance), social (identity, education, health, security),** economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces).

- **Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each** , physical factors have a weightage of 45 points and economic factors five points totalling to a 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated.

- **About AMRUT: AMRUT is the new avatar of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).** It adopts a project approach to ensure basic infrastructure services relating to water supply, sewerage, storm-water drains, transportation and development of green spaces and parks with special provision for meeting the needs of children. Under this mission, 10% of the budget allocation will be given to states and union territories as incentive based on the achievement of reforms during the previous year.

- **AMRUT will be implemented** in 500 locations with a population of one lakh and above. It would cover some cities situated on stems of main rivers, a few state capitals and important cities located in hilly areas, islands and tourist areas.

- **Under this mission** , states get the flexibility of designing schemes based on the needs of identified cities and in their execution and monitoring. States will only submit state annual action Plans to the centre for broad concurrence based on which funds will be released. But, in a significant departure from JNNURM, the central government will not appraise individual projects.

- **Central assistance will be to the extent of 50% of project cost** for cities and towns with a population of up to 10 lakhs and one-third of the project cost for those with a population of above 10 lakhs. Under the mission, states will transfer funds to urban local bodies within 7 days of transfer by central government and no diversion of funds to be made failing which penal interest would be charged besides taking other adverse action by the centre.

Central Zonal Council

- **The Council discussed various issues including road transport** , Pradhanmantri Gramin Sadak Yojna, measures to tackle Naxal violence, modernization of Police, infrastructure development of airports, minimum support price, National health mission and issues related to primary schools.

- **What are zonal councils?** Zonal councils have been established by the Parliament to promote interstate cooperation and coordination. They are statutory bodies established under the States Reorganisation Act 1956 and not constitutional bodies. They are only deliberative and advisory bodies.

- **There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:** The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.

- **The Central Zonal Council** , comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.

- **The Western Zonal Council** , comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Southern Zonal Council is composed of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

- **Composition: Chairman – The Union Home Minister** is the Chairman of each of these Councils. Vice Chairman – The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time. Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.

- **Advisers- One person nominated by the Planning Commission** (which has been replaced by NITI Ayog now) for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone. Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.

- **The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are:** Bringing out national integration. Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies. Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences. Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

- **Facts for Prelims:** The North Eastern States i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya (vii) Sikkim and (viii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.

Indian Culinary Institute

- **About ICI:** The main objective of setting up of the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) is to institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve, document, promote and disseminate Indian Cuisine, meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine, as also of promoting Cuisine as a Niche Tourism product.

- **The ICIs will be Centres of Excellence** which will offer structured regular programmes of study specific to culinary arts and culinary management leading to graduate and post graduate level degrees, promote research and innovation, organize demand driven certificate and diploma courses, document and create data base specific to Indian cuisine and commission studies and survey on cuisine.

- **Need: The need for ICI was felt as the formal education specific to Indian cuisine, a culinary art** , with pan India sweep is conspicuous by its absence. There is no regular credible institutional source at apex level for supply of cuisine specialists to the Sector. Also, there was no institutional mechanism to document and disseminate knowledge related to cuisine and gastronomy.

- **Significance:** In India, at present, there is a dearth of state-of-the-art training ground to groom top-of-the-line chefs of international standards. To fill this void, the Indian Culinary Institute would provide the appropriate training platform at par with the elite "Chef Schools" functioning in different parts of the developed world.

- **This effort will facilitate building a super-speciality food production** work-force to assure positions of culinary experts in the hospitality industry. The ICIs will also help the local youth to get trained in these streams as well as create entrepreneurs and make them self-sufficient.

- **The hotel and tourism industry in the proximity of these institutes will also get benefitted** by getting the trained and skilled manpower which in turn will enhance their business.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- **The first circuit includes beautification of Nellore tank and Pulicat Lake, facelift to Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary** , construction of a restaurant and development of Ubbala Madugu, Kotha Koduru, Mypadu, Rama Theertham, and Isukapalli project.

- **The second coastal tourism circuit** is aimed at developing Kakinada port, Hope Island, Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, construction of cottages and wooden huts at Passarlapudi, Aduru and S Yanam and development of Kotipalli project.

- **About Swadesh Darshan Scheme** : The Tourism Ministry had launched 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

- **Features of Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding. To leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.

- **Funding of individual project** will vary from state to state and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant). A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.

- **A Mission Directorate** headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders. PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.

Study on spending on education and health care by various countries

- **The study was conducted by the Institute** for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the request of the World Bank. It is the first of its kind to measure and compare the strength of countries' "human capital". The study underscores that when a country's human capital score increases, its economy grows.

- **India's relative performance:** India ranks 158th in the world for its investments in education and health care. The nation is placed behind Sudan (ranked 157th) and ahead of Namibia (ranked 159th) in the list. South Asian countries ranking below India in this report include Pakistan (164), Bangladesh (161) and Afghanistan (188). Countries in the region that have fared better than India in terms of human capital include Sri Lanka (102), Nepal (156), Bhutan (133) and Maldives (116).

- **Concerns:** India has improved its performance from its position of 162 in 1990. However, India is falling behind in terms of health and education of its workforce, which could potentially have long-term negative effects on the Indian economy.

- **Global performance:** The study places Finland at the top. The U.S. is ranked 27th, while China is at 44th and Pakistan at 164th. Turkey showed the most dramatic increase in human capital between 1990 and 2016. Asian countries with notable improvement include China, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam.

- **Within Latin America, Brazil stands out for improvement.** All these countries have had faster economic growth over this period than peer countries with lower levels of human capital improvement. In addition, the greatest increase among sub-Saharan African countries was in Equatorial Guinea.

- **Significance of human capital:** The findings show the association between investments in education and health and improved human capital and GDP which policy-makers ignore at their own peril. As the world economy grows increasingly dependent on digital technology, from agriculture to manufacturing to the service industry, human capital grows increasingly important for stimulating local and national economies.

Global Media Compact to raise awareness of SDGs About SDG Media Compact:

- **SDG Media Compact** is an initiative marking a new drive to advance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were unanimously adopted by all world leaders at the United Nations in 2015.

- **The Compact seeks** to inspire media and entertainment companies around the world to leverage their resources and creative talent to advance the Goals. The Compact is an initiative of the United Nations, in collaboration with the UN Foundation and with the support of FleishmanHillard.

- **Significance:** The SDG Media Compact is inclusive and aims to embrace media companies from all regions and all platforms. Participating organizations will have the opportunity to create content partnerships with the United Nations, whereby the organization will increase its efforts to source and share high-value media content and newsworthy opportunities relating to the SDGs. Regular monitoring and review meetings will gauge engagement.

- **Collectively** , the founding members of the SDG Media Compact already comprise an audience in the billions spanning over 80 countries on 4 continents and many more companies are expected to join.

- **About the SDGs:** The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by world leaders at the historic Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. Encompassing everything from health, to gender equality, and education, the Goals will mobilize efforts around the world to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Financial Inclusion Index:

- **Department of Financial Services (DFS)** , Ministry of Finance will release an Annual Financial Inclusion Index (FII). The single composite index gives a snap shot of level of financial inclusion that would guide Macro Policy perspective.

- **The index will be a measure of access** and usage of a basket of formal financial products and services that includes savings, remittances, credit, insurance and pension products.

- **The index will have three measurement dimensions:** Access to financial services. Usage of financial services. Quality.

- **Utility of the Index:** The various components of the index will help to measure financial services for use of internal policy making. Financial Inclusion Index can be used directly as a composite measure in development indicators.

- **It enables fulfillment of G20 Financial Inclusion** Indicators requirements. It will also facilitate researchers to study the impact of financial inclusion and other macro-economic variables.

Department of Space Mangalyaan Mission

- · **Mangalyaan** spacecraft has successfully completed 1000 Earth days in its orbit on June 19, 2017.

- **India sends 104 Satellites into Space** · India scripted a new chapter in the history of space domain on 15 February 2017 with the successful launch of a record number of 104 Satellites by ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C37 in a single mission. The primary satellite carried were the Cartosat-2 series satellite along with two Indian nano satellites.

- · **Out of these 101 co-passenger** satellites carried were international customer satellites from USA (96), Netherlands (1), Switzerland (1), Israel (1), Kazakhstan (1) and UAE (1).

- **Communication Satellites:** · "South Asia Satellite" – A gift from India to the South Asian countries, was successfully launched and dedicated to neighboring countries by Honorable Prime Minister of India. "South Asia Satellite" was successfully launched by GSLV-F09 on May 05, 2017.

- · **GSLV-MkIII in its first developmental flight, successfully launchesd GSAT-19, India's high throughput communication satellite on June 05, 2017** · GSAT-17 communication satellite was launched on June 29, 2017 from Kourou using procured launch services from M/s Arianespace. It carries C-band & Ext C-band payloads, payloads for mobile communication, search & rescue payload and Data Relay Transponder payload for providing continuity of services and in-orbit back up.

- **NavIC** · **The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) with an operational name of NavIC** ("sailor" or "navigator" which also stands for Navigation with Indian Constellation) an autonomous regional Satellite Navigation System set up by India · To provide accurate real-time positioning and timing services over India and the region extending to 1,500 kilometres (930 mi) around India

- **The Prime Minister**, Shri Narendra Modi, today chaired his twenty-ninth interaction through PRAGATI - the ICT-based, multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.

- **TRIFED promotes tribal products** through network of Tribes India Showrooms, Aadi Mahotsavs /Exhibitions and various e-commerce platforms namely, Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal and GeM which provide a window to National & International markets. TRIFED has brought more and more tribal artisans in its ambit of operations for improving their livelihood and upgrade their economic status.

Ministry of Science & Technology Important Events Indian Science Congress-2018

- **Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi**, inaugurated the 105th Session of the Indian Science Congress on 16 March 2018 at Imphal, Manipur.

- **Indian Science Congress** is an important annual event for the scientific community of India in which thousands of Scientists, researchers and science students take part in the scientific deliberations.

- **Major Achievements: Atlas for Visually Impaired (India)** · Union Minister for Science & Technology Dr. Harsh Vardhan released the Special Edition of "Atlas for Visually Impaired (India)" in English Braille on 10th February 2017. · Braille Atlas has been prepared by National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO) under Department of Science & Technology.

- **Nakshe Portal:** Launched by Dr. Harsh Vardhan on 250th Anniversary of Survey of India on 10th April 2017. Topographic maps or Open Series Maps (OSM) containing natural and man-made geographical features including terrain or topography are prepared by the SoI since its inception in 1767 and is in conformity with the National Map Policy-2005. These OSM maps have been made available for free download from "nakshe"web portal in pdf format on 1:50,000 scale through Aaadhar enabled user authentication process, in line with Digital India program of the Government of India.

Technology Day

- **Events:** Technology Day celebrated on 11th May 2017 to commemorate India's success in taking Science and Technology to the service of the country. On 11 May 1998 the Pokhran test was conducted. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared India a full-fledged nuclear state after operation 'Shakti' and it made India the 6th country to join the Nuclear Club.

- **Bose Institute's Unified Campus** at Salt Lake, Kolkata on 29th June2017 inaugurated by the then President Pranab Mukherjee in the Centenary year of the Institute. Closing ceremony of centenary celebrations of the Bose Institute in Kolkata on 29th November, 2017 addressed by President Ram Nath Kovind .

- **Commemorative stamp released to mark** the occasion of 250 years of Survey of India by the Minister of State for Communication (I/C) and Railways Shri Manoj Sinha on 22nd June 2017.

- **Minister of Science & Technology**, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harshvardhan launched "Pt DeenDayal Upadhayay Vigyan Gram Sankul Pariyojana" on 22nd Sept. 2017. This program will experiment and endeavour to formulate and implement appropriate S&T Interventions for Sustainable Development through cluster approach in Uttarakhand.

- **India and UK Science & Technology Ministers** reviewed the progress made in the India-UK partnership in science, technology and innovation on 1st Nov. 2017 - Science and Technology Ministers of India and UK reviewed the progress made in the India-UK partnership in science, technology and innovation which has been significantly intensified under the Newton-Bhabha program.

- **India-Canada Technology Summit held on 14th November 2017 in New Delhi.** Mission Innovation Smart Grids Workshop - Mission Innovation challenge on Smart Grids is collectively working to enable future smart grids powered by renewables. 20 participating countries with India, Italy and China as Co-lead are working together to realise this aspiration. An international workshop was organised during 16-19th November, 2017 at New Delhi to define research priorities and develop action plan for time bound action for realisation of these objectives.

New Initiatives

- · **A new scheme called SERB Distinguished Investigator Award (SERB-DIA)** approved for early identification and empowerment of exceptional scientists. The scheme aims to recognize and reward the young scientists who have performed extraordinarily well in the SERB supported projects under its Extra Mural Research scheme, but are yet to reach the stage of advanced professional recognitions like SS Bhatnagar awards/ JC Bose fellowships etc. The awardees will receive honorarium of Rs 15,000/- per month for a period of 3

years and will be awarded a project to further develop their research.

- · **TARE (Teacher Associates for Research Excellence) Mobility Scheme:** A new scheme has been formulated and approved by SERB, which aims to activate the latent and unused R&D capacity in our colleges and state universities that lack S&T infrastructure and culture. The TARE scheme will allow undertaking of part-time research by the faculty working in a regular capacity in State Universities or Colleges by integrating them in Academic Institutions such as IITs, IISc, IISERs, National labs, etc. located in the same city where the faculty member is working.

- · **MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge):** In the context of Start-up India initiative of the Government, implementation of MANAK has been initiated to foster culture of scientific innovation among school children of class VI to class X. This will significantly broaden the base our innovation pyramid to produce future entrepreneurs in large numbers. The programme has been targeted to encourage children to visualise/analyse needs of the society inspire them to devise innovative ideas to address them.

- · **Interdisciplinary Centre for Cyber Security and Cyber Defence of Critical Infrastructures:** An Interdisciplinary Centre for Cyber Security and Cyber Defence of Critical Infrastructures at IIT Kanpur has been funded with a total cost of around Rs.15 crores to create India's first such research centre under a dynamic young professor. The mission of this Centre is to promote research, education, training, and spawn start-ups to create technological safe guards to protect country's critical infrastructure.

- · **Quantum Information Science & Technology (QuST):** This new program initiated by DST aims at developing next generation and futuristic computation, communication and cryptography systems.

- · **Initiative to Promote Habitat Energy Efficiency (I-PHEE):** A new national programme on "Initiative to Promote Habitat Energy Efficiency (I-PHEE)" to improve energy performance of buildings and cities has been launched. It would support enhancement of knowledge and practice to save energy in design, construction and operation of buildings. 105 research proposals were received, out of which 31 have been recommended for funding.

- · **Materials on Energy Storage (MES):** A new programme on the Materials on Energy Storage (MES) to support R&D activities aimed at innovative materials for energy storage, and to build energy storage device with enhanced output for multifunctional applications was launched during the year. Aiming the efficient use and further increase of renewable energy, and demonstrating its value in terms of flexibility in the energy systems are the prime objective of the initiative. 130 proposals were received and 18 were approved for funding.

Ease of Doing Science

- · **SERB Goes Online:** Science and Engineering Research Board has become 100% online for processing of all proposals under its various schemes. This has helped thousands of Scientists to submit their proposal and see the decisions online without wasting time through paper correspondence. This has also improved the speed of decision making and transparency on the submitted proposals.

- · **Complete Online Processing of INSPIRE:** Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) program which has 5 components and enrolls nearly 1.5 lakhs students every year. It is completely ONLINE process right from submission of application to release of scholarships/ fellowships etc. to every student under the scheme through web-based system. For the last 3-4 years it is functioning in a complete paperless mode. Students from across the country use this web-based ONLINE system and get the benefits of this scheme.

- · **An ONLINE web-based system has been introduced for FIST scheme** which supports R&D infrastructure. Processing of proposals right from submission of applications to release of funds to the Departments/ Colleges would become easily accessible and transparent with this initiative.

- · **Greater Access of High-end Equipment/Facilities:** A common webportal is being developed which will be populated with the name of high-end equipment and facilities available with the institutions/ universities and their online booking and use in a transparent way. This will facilitate researchers/ students the access of these facilities. The portal will be launched with full functionality by the end of 2017.

- · **India S&T Portal:** Development of an ambitious India S&T Portal has been initiated with the objective to provide one stop information centre to school students, scientists and the society at large on various schemes and programmes/activities and major achievements in S&T. This would be a 360-degree view and connect to all the stakeholders and activities of S&T in India. An internet-TV channel on S&T is also in the advanced stages of planning and execution. Currently, systems are being set up for production of contents.

AAI's Ahmedabad and Indore Airports awarded as Best Airports under National Tourism Awards 2016-17

- **AAI's Ahmedabad** and Indore Airports awarded as Best Airports under National Tourism Awards 2016-17

- **Airports Authority of India's** Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Airport, Indore and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad were conferred with the prestigious National Tourism Awards 2016-17 at a glittering award function on World Tourism Day here today.

- **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport,** Ahmedabad received the Best Airport Award in Major Cities category and Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Airport, Indore received the Best Airport Award in 'Rest of India' category for promotion of Tourism at these airports. The award was presented by Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism, Shri K.J. Alphons.

- **Shri Manoj Gangal, Airport Director**, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad and Smt. Aryama Sanyal, Airport Director, Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Airport, Indore along with Shri Keshava Sharma, Regional Executive Director (WR) AAI, received the award from the Minister and Smt. Rashmi Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism .

- **The Ministry of Tourism presents National Tourism Awards** to various segments of the travel and tourism industry every year. These awards are presented to State Governments / Union Territories, classified hotels, heritage hotels, approved travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators, individuals and other private organizations in recognition of their performance in their respective fields and also to encourage healthy competition with an aim to promoting tourism.

- **One of the busiest airport of Madhya Pradesh**, Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Airport, Indore is predominantly connected to major cities. The state-of -the -art integrated terminal building of Indore airport has world-class facilities and services.

- **Indore Airport has been awarded the 'Best Airport by Region'** among the airports handling under 2 million passengers per year in Asia-Pacific region.

- **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad** is the Airport of India's first World Heritage City. The geographic location of the Airport makes it suitable for connectivity to major important international and domestic destinations.

- **Ahmedabad Airport has risen to ASQ rating of 4.8 on the scale of 5**. The Airport was recently awarded the "Most Improved Airport" in the Asia- Pacific region for the year 2017 by Airports Council International.

World Tourism Day

- **The Union Minister for Tourism (IC), Shri. K.J. Alphons**, presented the National Tourism Awards 2016-17) on the World Tourism Day, in New Delhi, today. The Minister also launched the 'Incredible India Mobile App' and the "Incredible India Tourist Facilitators Certification" programme.

- **Speaking on the occasion**, the Tourism Minister said that India has taken great strides forward in the field of tourism during the last four years of the Government and added that tourism, today, is the cornerstone of the Indian economy, as it is a major source of employment and foreign exchange, and in order to tap the full potential of this sector, industry has to join hands.

- **Congratulating the awardees**, Shri K. J. Alphons also shared the concern that the tourism sector needs to improve its hospitality services since it is the hospitality offered which is the distinguishing feature of India and gives it an edge over other countries. He also added that it is the responsibility of every citizen to build the image of the country as safe for anyone to travel.

- **The Minister also announced that**, India will be the host country for official World Tourism Day celebrations for the UNWTO, in 2019. The theme for the World Tourism Day 2018 being "Tourism & Digital Transformation", the Minister recounted the various digital initiatives taken by the Ministry in harnessing technology for tourism promotion, which include, launch of a new Incredible India website; 24 X7 Chat bot interface on this website; launch of a new website on Buddhism in India and many more initiatives..

- **The Minister also said that the Ministry of Tourism** has formulated a voluntary scheme for Approval of Operational Motels, with effect from 25th September 2018 with an aim of recognizing the Motel segment as a component of the overall tourism product, and set standards of facilities and services of Motels.

- **Shri K J Alphons also informed the industry** that the flood-stricken Kerala is now ready to receive tourists since the hotels and tourist sites are now operational. He also added that the state is rapidly recovering from the disaster and it is now the time for the tourism industry to support the state's tourism sector.

- **Delivering the welcome address**, the Union Tourism Secretary, Smt. Rashmi Verma said that in the last four years, India has aggressively implemented its promotion strategies in branding, advertising, and selling of its tourism potentials.

- **Smt. Rashmi Verma also added that the Ministry in tune with the changing times**, has brought in new initiatives like the Adopt a Heritage scheme wherein collaboration with corporate, schools and other stakeholders was initiated to improve facilities at monuments, initiation of 12 iconic sites, MoUs for bilateral tourism with countries, first ever India Tourism Mart and the International Buddhist Conclave 2018.

- **The Secretary also congratulated the industry stakeholders** without whose partnership the achievements in the Tourism sector in the last few years, would not have been possible.

- **The Ministry of Tourism annually presents National Tourism Awards** to various segments of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. These awards are being given since the early 1990s and are presented to State Governments / Union Territories, classified hotels, heritage hotels, approved travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators, individuals and other private organizations, in recognition of their performance in their respective fields, and also to encourage healthy competition with an aim to promote tourism.

- **The National Tourism Awards have over the years** emerged as a prestigious recognition of achievements in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. This year, a total of 77 awards were presented to the tourism industry stakeholders, State Governments, central agencies and individuals. The list of award winners is at Annexure.

- **The Certification programme launched today**, is the only one-of-its-kind of online learning, aims to brand the country in a positive light, through these facilitators, by building capacity of the key touch points for tourists, desiring that each interaction result in superior experience for the visitors. This online learning platform has been developed by Wipro Limited.

- **The Incredible India Mobile App**, showcases India as a holistic destination, revolving around major experiences, such as spirituality, heritage, adventure, culture, yoga, wellness and more. The mobile app has been designed keeping in mind the preferences of the modern traveler and follows the trends and technologies of international standards. The app has been equipped with features to assist the traveller in each phase of their journey to India. The app has been developed by Tech Mahindra.

Supreme Court allows live streaming of cases

- **Pilot project:** As per the court's order, the project must be implemented in a progressive, structured and phased manner, with certain safeguards to ensure that the purpose of live-streaming of proceedings is achieved holistically and that it does not interfere with the administration of justice or the dignity and majesty of the court hearing the matter and/or impinge upon any rights of the litigants or witnesses.

- **As a pilot project**, only cases of constitutional and national importance being argued for final hearing before the Constitution Bench be live-streamed initially. For this, it said, permission of the court concerned will have to be sought in writing in advance. Consent of parties to the proceedings must be insisted upon, and if there is no unanimity between them, the court concerned can take the appropriate decision in the matter. The court concerned will also have the power to revoke permission at any stage of the proceedings.

- **There must be a reasonable time-delay** (say 10 minutes) between the live court proceedings and the broadcast, in order to ensure that any information which ought not to be shown, as directed by the court, can be edited from being broadcast. Till a full-fledged module and mechanism for live-streaming of the proceedings of the Supreme Court over the internet is evolved, it can be live-streamed in designated areas within the court via intranet.

- **What necessitated this?** Although courts in India are ordinarily open to all members of the public, sometimes they are denied the opportunity to witness the proceedings due to logistical issues and infrastructure restrictions. By providing 'virtual' access of live court proceedings to one and all, it will effectuate the right of access to justice or right to open justice and public trial, right to know the developments of law and including the right of justice at the doorstep of the litigants.

- **It will "reduce the public's reliance on second-hand narratives to obtain information about important judgments of the court and the course of judicial hearings".** Society will be able to view court proceedings first-hand and form reasoned and educated opinions about the functioning of courts. This will help reduce misinformation and misunderstanding about the judicial process.

- **Significance of the move:** This is a giant step by the Supreme Court to move towards a regime of transparency. Live streaming will deal head on with the problem of distance. Given that the court is located in New Delhi, many people cannot afford to be present physically in Supreme Court to follow the arguments, even if the case directly affects them in some way. In fact, even litigants are often unable to travel to court because of the cost and distance involved, leaving it entirely to their lawyers to run the case.

- **A live telecast of proceedings** also has the potential to reduce unwarranted delays in the cases caused by the occasionally cavalier attitude of lawyers. With the client's eye firmly on them, lawyers are likely to expedite cases. Further, this will provide an opportunity to young lawyers to showcase their talents to the world and has the potential to break the stranglehold of a select few over the legal profession.

- **Live streaming** could act as a welcome check on the judiciary. With the public watching, there is every chance that there will be a reduction in the sometimes unnecessary oral comments that cause much controversy but have no judicial bearing.

- **What next? Supreme Court Rules,** 2013, will have to suitably amended to provide for the regulatory framework to incorporate the changes.

- **Besides, live telecast** comes with some drawbacks. As seen in the Parliament, there is a tendency to grandstand among lawmakers, who want to show their electorate that they are indeed working hard. The court has to make sure proceedings are unaffected by the introduction of a new technology.

Police forces in 6 UTs merged

- **Changes:** The rules effectively mean that officers who are not direct IPS recruits could be posted in any of the six UTs and will be at the disposal of the Ministry. There are around 533 posts that will be covered under the new rules; they include assistant commissioners of police and deputy superintendent of police.

- **The Rules will come into effect** upon the promotion or direct recruitment of Inspectors to the post of ACP. Half of the posts at the ACP rank will be filled through direct recruitment and the other half through promotion. Earlier these postings were decided by the respective UT administrators.

- **The post/grade/service eligible** for induction into the Entry Grade for the new service, according to the notification, would include personnel currently employed as inspectors in the Delhi Police, A&N Islands Police, Lakshadweep Police, Daman & Diu Police, Dadra and Nagar Haveli Police and Chandigarh Police.

- **Significance:** This initiative is being viewed as the first step towards the creation of a central police cadre allowing for the posting of police personnel across the country irrespective of the force they are initially inducted into. A central pool allowing inter-transferability would also ensure that local police personnel do not fall prey to serving vested interests in their home services and ensure that they don't become complacent.

National Digital Communications Policy-2018

- **Impact:** The NDCP-2018 envisions supporting India's transition to a digitally empowered economy and society by fulfilling the information and communications needs of citizens and enterprises by establishment of a ubiquitous, resilient and affordable digital communications infrastructure and services.

- **The 'Customer focused' and 'application driven'** NDCP-2018 shall lead to new ideas and innovations, after the launch of advanced technology such as 5G, IOT, M2M, etc. which shall govern the telecom sector of India.

- **The key objectives of the policy are:** Broadband for all. Creating four million additional jobs in the Digital Communications sector. Enhancing the contribution of the Digital Communications sector to 8% of India's GDP from ~ 6% in 2017.

- **Propelling India** to the Top 50 Nations in the ICT Development Index of ITU from 134 in 2017. Enhancing India's contribution to Global Value Chains. Ensuring Digital Sovereignty. These objectives are to be achieved by 2022.

- **The policy aims to:** Provide universal broadband connectivity at 50 Mbps to every citizen. Provide 1 Gbps connectivity to all Gram Panchayats by 2020 and 10 Gbps by 2022. Ensure connectivity to all uncovered areas. Attract investments of USD 100 billion in the Digital Communications Sector. Train one million manpower for building New Age Skill. Expand IoT ecosystem to 5 billion connected devices.

- **Establish a comprehensive data** protection regime for digital communications that safeguards the privacy, autonomy and choice of individuals. Facilitate India's effective participation in the global digital economy. Enforce accountability through appropriate institutional mechanisms to assure citizens of safe. Secure digital communications infrastructure and services.

- **The policy advocates:** Establishment of a National Digital Grid by creating a National Fibre Authority. Establishing Common Service Ducts and utility corridors in all new city and highway road projects.

- **Creating a collaborative institutional mechanism** between Centre, States and Local Bodies for Common Rights of Way, standardization of costs and timelines. Removal of barriers to approvals. Facilitating development of Open Access Next Generation Networks.

- **Background:** As the present world has entered the era of modern technological advancements in the Telecom Sector such as 5G, IoT, M2M etc., a need was being felt to introduce a 'customer focused' and 'application driven' policy for the Indian Telecom Sector, which can form the main pillar of Digital India by addressing emerging opportunities for expanding not only the availability of telecom services but also telecom based services.

- **Accordingly**, the new National Digital Communications Policy – 2018 has been formulated, in place of the existing National Telecom Policy-2012, to cater to the modern needs of the digital communications sector of India.

Ordinance To Supercede Medical Council Of India

- **The committee or the 'Board of Governors'** has now been appointed by the government in "supersession of the MCI". The Board members include persons of eminence in the medical field.

- **Background:** Pending parliament's approval to the bill, the government has chosen to go for the ordinance since the term of the existing committee running the MCI ends in November.

- **A bill to replace the MCI** with a National Medical Commission (NMC) has already been presented in parliament. A parliamentary standing committee has also made its recommendations, but due to time factor, the bill "has gone into an area of uncertainty."

- **National Medical Commission Bill:** The bill provides for the constitution of four autonomous boards entrusted with conducting undergraduate and postgraduate education, assessment and accreditation of medical institutions and registration of practitioners under the National Medical Commission.

- **According to the draft bill**, the commission will have government nominated chairman and members, and the board members will be selected by a search committee under the Cabinet Secretary. There will five elected and 12 ex-officio members in the commission.

- **As per the Bill**, the government, under the National Medical Commission (NMC), can dictate guidelines for fees up to 40% of seats in private medical colleges. This is aimed at giving students relief from the exorbitant fees charged by these colleges and is a standout feature of the bill.

- **The bill also has a provision for a common entrance exam and licentiate (exit)** exam that medical graduates have to pass before practising or pursuing PG courses. For MBBS, students have to clear NEET, and before they step into practice, they must pass the exit exam.

- **Recognised medical institutions** don't need the regulator's permission to add more seats or start PG course. This mechanism to reduce the discretionary powers of the regulator.

- **Earlier, medical colleges required the MCI's approval for establishment,** recognition, renewal of the yearly permission or recognition of degrees, and even increase the number of students they admitted. Under the new bill, the powers of the regulator are reduced to establishment and recognition. This means less red tape, but also less scrutiny of medical colleges.

- **Background:** The Medical Council of India was first established in 1934 under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1933. This Act was repealed and replaced with a new Act in 1956. Under the 1956 Act, the objectives of MCI include:

- **Maintenance of standards** in medical education through curriculum guidelines, inspections and permissions to start colleges, courses or increasing number of seats.

- **Recognition of medical qualifications.** Registration of doctors and maintenance of the All India Medical Register. Regulation of the medical profession by prescribing a code of conduct and taking action against erring doctors.

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

- **About IONS:** IONS, the 21st century's first significant international maritime security initiative launched in February 2008, provides a forum for discussion of regional maritime issues and promotes friendly relationships among member nations. It presently has 24 members and eight observer navies.

- **It is a voluntary initiative** that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues and, in the process, endeavors to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead.

- **Under the charter of business** adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security

Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)

- **Background:** Currently, the Centre and states together hold 49% stake in GSTN. The remaining 51% is held by five private financial institutions – HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank Ltd, ICICI Bank Ltd, NSE Strategic Investment Co and LIC Housing Finance Ltd.

- **What necessitated this?** GST, which subsumed over a dozen local taxes, was rolled out on July 1, 2017. Over 1.1 crore businesses are registered on the GSTN portal. With enhanced role of GSTN from just collecting taxes to data analytics, the government felt that it should now be the majority owner in the IT backbone provider.

- **What is GSTN?** The GSTN was floated to aid the rollout of the new indirect tax regime. The company will provide information technology support to all stakeholders for smooth implementation of the new taxation regime across the country and will be the repository of all information related to taxation and entities registered under GST.

Mobile Application "Jan Dhan Darshak"

- **About Jan Dhan Darshak app:** As the name suggests, this app will act as a guide for the common people in locating a financial service touch point at a given location in the country.

- **The app will be in a unique position** to provide a citizen centric platform for locating financial service touch points across all providers such as banks, post office, CSC, etc. These services could be availed as per the needs and convenience of the common people.

- **Some of the salient features of this App are as follows:** Find nearby Financial touch points, based on current location (Branches/ATM/Post offices). Search by place name. Search by place name also available with Voice Interface.

- **Phone number of bank branches available in app, with the facility of call button for integrated dialing.** Users' feedback will go directly to the concerned bank for carrying out the necessary updation in data on financial touch points.

Key facts:

- **Sirhind and Rajasthan** Feeders take off upstream of Harike Head works and flow through Punjab before crossing over to Rajasthan. The twin canals have a common bank and were constructed in the 1960s as lined (brick) channels to convey water to command areas in Punjab and Rajasthan.

- **Astra BVR Air-to-Air Missile:** Context: Astra, the indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM), was recently successfully test fired by the Indian Air Force from Su-30 aircraft.

- **Astra:** It is the indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air It is an all-weather, state-of-the-art missile developed by DRDO and can engage and destroy enemy aircraft at supersonic speed (1.2 Mach to 1.4 Mach) in head-on (up to 80 km) and tail-chase (up to 20 km) modes. The 3.8 metre tall Astra is a radar homing missile and the smallest of the DRDO-developed missiles and can be launched from different altitudes. It can reach up to 110 km when fired from an altitude of 15 km, 44 km when launched from an altitude of eight km and 21 km when fired from sea level.

- **What is G4?** Formed in 2005, the G4 nations comprise Brazil, Germany, India and Japan. Unlike many inter-governmental bodies whose primary motives are economic and political, the G4's aim is to ensure permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council.

Ministry of Ayush

- **New Ministry of AYUSH** was set up on 9th November 2014 to ensure the optimal development and propagation of AYUSH systems of health care.

- **Ministry of AYUSH successfully organized the International Day of Yoga consecutively for 3 years**. 21st June was declared unanimously as International Day of Yoga by the United Nations General Assembly on 11th December, 2014 following relentless efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. IDY on 21st June 2015 established two Guinness World Records for the largest yoga class, featuring 35,985 people and for the largest number of participating nationalities (84 nations). IDY 2015 in New Delhi, 2016 in Chandigarh and 2017 in Lucknow.

- **The Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy conducted one- month Yoga Training Camp** from 21st May to 21st June in last 3 years. During 2017 alone, more than 10 lakhs people got benefitted from this programme.

- **1st National Ayurveda Day- Was celebrated on Dhanvantari Jayanti on 28th October, 2016**. On this occasion, The Ministry of AYUSH instituted "National Dhanwantari Ayurveda Award" to be conferred to eminent Vaidyas and Ayurveda experts and motivate them to adopt best practices of Ayurveda in the pursuit of excellence. The Ministry of AYUSH launched "Mission Madhumeha through Ayurveda" on the occasion of first National Ayurveda Day. A protocol on Madhumeh has also been prepared by the Ministry of AYUSH.

- **2nd National Ayurveda Day- Ministry celebrated on 17th October, 2017.** On this occasion, Hon'ble Prime Minister dedicated All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), to the Nation on 17th October, 2017. On this occasion Ministry also organized Conference at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi to bring all Stake holders of Ayurveda Sector and create a platform for constructive discussion on the road map to triple the Industry's potential in just five-year time. It Organized the Ayurveda Conclave Vision 2022- Taking of Ayurveda Sector from $2.5 Billion to $ 8 Billion Industry.

- **The First Siddha Day** was celebrated on 4th January, 2018 observing the birthday of Siddhar Agathiyar at Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, Chennai.

- **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.

- **The first ever All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) is set up along the lines of AIIMS on the 2nd Ayurveda Day (17thOctober, 2017).** The total campus area of Institute is 10.015 acres with a budget of Rs.157 Crore. It has an NABH Accredited Hospital and an Academic Block. Out Patient Services are being provided in the hospital block of the AIIA and medicines are given free of cost. The indoor patient department has provision for 200 beds.

- **Ministry of AYUSH in collaboration with Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**; Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Pharmexcil organized the 'International AROGYA 2017' – First Edition of International Exhibition and Conference on AYUSH and Wellness on the theme 'Enhancing the export potential of AYUSH' during 4-7 Dec. 2017. The event was attended by International Ayurveda Experts/ Academicians/ Scientists/ Regulators/ Manufacturers. During the International Conference and Regulators Meet, important topics relating to standardization and quality control in AYUSH sector; enhancing the export potential of AYUSH and business opportunities; and integrative healthcare, etc. were extensively deliberated

AYUSH Health Care Services National AYUSH Mission (NAM)

- **Launched on September 2014** for promotion of AYUSH healthcare and for supporting the efforts of State/UT Governments for the development of AYUSH sector including Ayurveda.

- **The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of National AYUSH Mission (NAM)** as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme from 1st April, 2017 to 31st March, 2020 with financial outlay of Rs.2400.00 Crore.

- **Under Mainstreaming** of AYUSH component- As on 29 December 2017- 8994 PHCs, 2871 CHCs and 506 District Hospitals have been co-located with AYUSH facilities.

- **Under NAM, Ministry** intends to set up fifty bedded hospitals in all the districts in next 10 years. So far sixty-six 50 bedded integrated AYUSH hospitals and 992 yoga wellness centres have been assisted.

- **National Health Policy, 2017** ensures access to AYUSH remedies through co-location in public facilities. Policy also recognizes the need to nurture AYUSH system of medicine, through development of infrastructural facilities of teaching institutions, improving quality control of drugs, capacity building of institutions and professionals.

- **Swasthya Rakshan Programme (SRP)** has been launched through all AYUSH institutions for promotion of health.

- **With the efforts of Ministry,** Insurance coverage is being extended to AYUSH treatment and a notification in this regard has been issued by IRDA.

- **Quality Council of India (QCI)** at the behest of Ministry of AYUSH has developed a Scheme for Voluntary Certification of Yoga Professionals.

- **Upgradation of drug testing laboratories** has been supported under NAM in most of the States. In addition, 55 Drug Testing Laboratories have been approved for the purpose of quality assurance.

- **Good clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines** for clinical trials on Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani Medicines and guidelines for inspection of GMP compliance by ASU&H drugs industry issued.

- **During the financial year 2017-18** seven Pharmacies and nine Drugs Testing Laboratories have been financial supported under National AYUSH Mission (NAM).

- **27 Drug Testing Laboratories** under Central Government and 47 State Pharmacies have been supported for strengthening of their infrastructural and functional capacity. As on date 55 laboratories are approved or licensed under the provisions of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 for quality testing of Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani drugs and raw materials.

International Cooperation

- **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)-** Federal level MoU signed with 11 countries and Institute level MoUs signed with 24 Countries.

- **28 AYUSH Information Cells** have been set up in 25 countries so far.

- **Signed Agreement with WHO** for promotion of AYUSH systems.

- **1st Meeting of BIMSTEC Task Force** on Traditional Medicine in India was organised by the Ministry of AYUSH during 24-25 October, 2017 at New Delhi, wherein delegations from the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Republic of India, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Kingdom of Thailand along with the BIMSTEC Secretariat participated.

- **A project Collaboration Agreement (PCA)** has been signed between Ministry of AYUSH and WHO, Geneva for developing WHO Terminologies in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha.

- **The Second Training program for Traditional Medicine regulator/practitioner of Africa was held on 08 – 14 February, 2018** in New Delhi as a part of proposal approved by the Cabinet and announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India during Third India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS III). This was conducted under one of the three areas for the cooperation in social development and capacity building with African nations. 31 participants from 11 African countries attended the training programme.

Apex Institutions in Northeast

- **North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda & Homoeopathy**, Shillong has been inaugurated in 2016. It is a state-of-the-art institute, consisting of Ayurveda College and Homoeopathy College, along with attached hospital of Ayurveda and Homoeopathy of 100 beds and 50 beds respectively. North Eastern Institute of Folk Medicine (NEIFM), Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh is the centre of Excellence and Apex Research Centre for all aspects of Folk Medicine knowledge.

- **Launched an online virtual platform** 'www.e-charak.in' and a mobile application 'e-charak', In the collaboration with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC)-Hyderabad.

- **Monthly Mandi price of high demand medicinal plants** is being provided in collaboration with Federation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Stakeholders (EFDMAPS).

- **365 days campaign on Medicinal Plants "to spread awareness"** has been launched by NMPB at Jaipur on 20th and 21st August 2016.

- **To implement Space Based tools in the monitoring and strategic** decision making in the field of Medicinal Plants, National Medicinal Plants Board has signed an MoU with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), India n Space Research Organization (ISRO).

- **NMPB with Quality Council of India (QCI) has finalized** the guidelines for voluntary certification of raw material for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Field Collection Practices (GFCP).

- **NMPB has supported a project on "Development on Training Modules and facilitation guides for Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) and Good Field Collection Practices (GFCP)** for Medicinal Plants to ICAR – DMAPR for an amount of Rs.102.294 lakhs. In this regard, ICAR, DMAPR, Gujarat has developed a training module and organized first training program from 18th to 22nd September 2017.

AYUSH Education Reforms

- **In order to raise the levels of the AYUSH education**, Ministry is planning a country-wide collective of AYUSH students which will serve as a platform for students for organizing various activities.

- **National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET)** for all AYUSH Educational Institutions for admission of undergraduate Course through designated Authority. For all system of AYUSH, minimum 50% marks should be obtained by the candidates to be eligible for admission in Under Graduate Course.

- **National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET)** for all AYUSH Educational Institutions for admission of Post graduate Course / Exit Exam through designated Authority. For all system of AYUSH, minimum 50% marks should be obtained by the candidates to qualify the test. By assessing the percentage of qualifying students in PG NEET / Exit examination of a particular AYSUH Institution, the due benefits should be given to that particular college and the same will be incorporated in MSR of both ASU & H system. Colleges shall be exempted from obtaining permission from Central Government for one year, if 70% of the students of the previous batch qualify the PG-NEET / Exit exam

- **AYUSH National Teachers Eligibility Test** shall be conducted for appointment of all teachers in AYUSH Institutions, and a unique verification code for such teachers shall be allotted by CCH / CCIM before their appointment.

- **The attendance of Teaching Staffs** in all AYUSH Medical Colleges shall be through geo location based system, which shall be made accessible by the relevant Council (CCIM / CCH) as well as the Ministry.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018

- **The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities)** Amendment Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot, on August 3, 2018.

- **It seeks to amend the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**. The Act prohibits the commission of offences against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and establishes special courts for the trial of such offences and the rehabilitation of victims.

- **In 2018, the Supreme Court stated that for persons accused of committing an offence under the Act**, approval of the Senior Superintendent of Police will be required before an arrest is made. Further, the Deputy Superintendent of Police may conduct a preliminary enquiry to find out whether there is a prima facie case under the Act.

- **The Bill states that the investigating officer will not require the approval of any authority for the arrest of an accused**. Further, it provides that a preliminary enquiry will not be required for the registration of a First Information Report against a person accused under the Act.

- **The Act states that persons accused of committing an offence under the Act cannot apply for anticipatory bail**. The Bill seeks to clarify that this provision will apply despite any judgements or orders of a court that provide otherwise

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017

- **The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017** was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot on April 5, 2017. It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

- **Role of NCSC: Currently, under the Constitution the NCSC has the power to look into complaints and welfare measures with regard to Scheduled Castes**, backward classes and Anglo-Indians. The Bill seeks to remove the power of the NCSC to examine matters related to backward classes.

- **Constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes:** The NCBC is a body set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. It has the power to examine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of groups within the list of backward classes, and advise the central government in this regard. The Bill seeks to establish the NCBC under the Constitution, and provide it the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.

- **Note that this Bill was introduced alongside the National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017** that seeks to repeal the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.

- **Backward classes: The Constitution Amendment Bill states that the President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various states and union territories**. He may do this in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state. However, a law of Parliament will be required if the list of backward classes is to be amended.

- **Composition and service conditions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President. Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules.

- **Functions: Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the duties of the NCBC will include:** (i) investigating and monitoring how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented, (ii) inquiring into specific complaints regarding violation of rights, and (iii) advising and making recommendations on socio-economic development of such classes. The central and state governments will be required to consult with the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.

- **The NCBC will be required to present annual reports to the President on working of the safeguards for backward classes.** These reports will be tabled in Parliament, and in the state legislative assemblies of the concerned states.

- **Powers of a civil court:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints. These powers include: (i) summoning people and examining them on oath, (ii) requiring production of any document or public record, and (iii) receiving evidence.

Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018

- **The Committee of Experts on a Data Protection Framework for India (Chair: Justice B. N. Srikrishna)** submitted its report and draft Bill to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on July 27, 2018. The Committee was constituted in August, 2017 to examine issues related to data protection, recommend methods to address them, and draft a data protection Bill.

- **Fiduciary relationship: The Committee observed that the regulatory framework has to balance the interests of the individual with regard to his personal data and the interests of the entity such as a service provider who has access to this data.** It noted that the relationship between the individual and the service provider must be viewed as a fiduciary relationship. This is due to the dependence of the individual on the service provider to obtain a service. Therefore, the service provider processing the data is under an obligation to deal fairly with the individual's personal data, and use it for the authorised purposes only.

- **Obligations of fiduciaries:** To prevent abuse of power by service providers, the law should establish their basic obligations, including: (i) the obligation to process data fairly and reasonably, and (ii) the obligation to give notice to the individual at the time of collecting data to various points in the interim.

- **Definition of personal data:** The Committee noted that it is important to define what constitutes personal information. It defined personal data to include data from which an individual may be identified or identifiable, either directly or indirectly. The Committee sought to distinguish personal data protection from the protection of sensitive personal data, since its processing could result in greater harm to the individual. Sensitive data is related to intimate matters where there is a higher expectation of privacy (e.g., caste, religion, and sexual orientation of the individual).

- **Consent-based processing:** The Committee noted that consent must be treated as a pre-condition for processing personal data. Such consent should be informed or meaningful. Further, for certain vulnerable groups, such as children, and for sensitive personal data, a data protection law must sufficiently protect their interests, while considering their vulnerability, and exposure to risks online. Further, sensitive personal information should require explicit consent of the individual.

- **Non-consensual processing:** The Committee noted that it is not possible to obtain consent of the individual in all circumstances. Therefore, separate grounds may be established for processing data without consent. The Committee identified four bases for non-consensual processing: (i) where processing is relevant for the state to discharge its welfare functions, (ii) to comply with the law or with court orders in India, (iii) when necessitated by the requirement to act promptly (to save a life, for instance), and (iv) in employment contracts, in limited situations (such, as where giving the consent requires an unreasonable effort for the employer).

- **Participation rights:** The rights of the individual are based on the principles of autonomy, self-determination, transparency and accountability to give individuals control over their data. The Committee categorised these rights in three categories: (i) the right to access, confirmation and correction of data, (ii) the right to object to data processing, automated decision-making, direct marketing and the right to data portability, and (iii) the right to be forgotten.

- **Enforcement models:** The Committee also recommended setting up a regulator to enforce the regulatory framework. The Authority will have the power to inquire into any violations of the data protection regime, and can take action against any data fiduciary responsible for the same. The Authority may also categorise certain fiduciaries as significant data fiduciaries based on their ability to cause greater harm to individuals. Such fiduciaries will be required to undertake additional obligations.

- **Amendments to Other Laws:** The Committee noted that various allied laws are relevant in the context of data protection because they either require or authorise the processing of personal data. These laws include the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the Census Act, 1948. It stated that the Bill provides minimum data protection standards for all data processing in the country. In the event of inconsistency, the standards set in the data privacy law will apply to the processing of data. The Committee also recommended

amendments to the Aadhaar Act, 2016 to bolster its data protection framework.

Bill Summary on The Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018

- **Rights of the individual:** The Bill sets out certain rights of the individual. These include: (i) right to obtain confirmation from the fiduciary on whether its personal data has been processed, (ii) right to seek correction of inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-date personal data, and (iii) right to have personal data transferred to any other data fiduciary in certain circumstances.

- **Obligations of the data fiduciary:** The Bill sets out obligations of the entity who has access to the personal data (data fiduciary). These include: (i) implementation of policies with regard to processing of data, (ii) maintaining transparency with regard to its practices on processing data, (iii) implementing security safeguards (such, as encryption of data), and (iv) instituting grievance redressal mechanisms to address complaints of individuals.

- **Data Protection Authority:** The Bill provides for the establishment of a Data Protection Authority. The Authority is empowered to: (i) take steps to protect interests of individuals, (ii) prevent misuse of personal data, and (iii) ensure compliance with the Bill. It will consist of a chairperson and six members, with knowledge of at least 10 years in the field of data protection and information technology. Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an Appellate Tribunal established by the central government and appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.

- **Grounds for processing personal data:** The Bill allows processing of data by fiduciaries if consent is provided. However, in certain circumstances, processing of data may be permitted without consent of the individual.

- **These grounds include:** (ii) if necessary for any function of Parliament or state legislature, or if required by the state for providing benefits to the individual, (iii) if required under law or for the compliance of any court judgement, (iv) to respond to a medical emergency, threat to public health or breakdown of public order, or, (v) for reasonable purpos¬¬es specified by the Authority, related to activities such as fraud detection, debt recovery, and whistle blowing.

- **Grounds for processing sensitive personal data:** Processing of sensitive personal data is allowed on certain grounds, including: (i) based on explicit consent of the individual, (ii) if necessary for any function of Parliament or state legislature, or, if required by the state for providing benefits to the individual, or (iii) if required under law or for the compliance of any court judgement.

- **Sensitive personal data includes passwords, financial data, biometric data, genetic data, caste, religious or political beliefs**, or any other category of data specified by the Authority. Additionally, fiduciaries are required to institute appropriate mechanisms for age verification and parental consent when processing sensitive personal data of children.

- **Transfer of data outside India: Personal data (except sensitive personal data) may be transferred outside India under certain conditions**. These include: (i) where the central government has prescribed that transfers to a particular country are permissible, or (ii) where the Authority approves the transfer in a situation of necessity.

- **Exemptions: The Bill provides exemptions from compliance with its provisions, for certain reasons including:** (i) state security, (ii) prevention, investigation, or prosecution of any offence, or (iii) personal, domestic, or journalistic purposes.

- **Offences and Penalties:** Under the Bill, the Authority may levy penalties for various offences by the fiduciary including (i) failure to perform its duties, (ii) data processing in violation of the Bill, and (iii) failure to comply with directions issued by the Authority. For example, under the Bill, the fiduciary is required to notify the Authority of any personal data breach which is likely to cause harm to the individual. Failure to promptly notify the Authority can attract a penalty of the higher of Rs 5 crore or 2% of the worldwide turnover of the fiduciary.

- **Amendments to other laws:** The Bill makes consequential amendments to the Information Technology Act, 2000. It also amends the Right to Information Act, 2005, and to permit non-disclosure of personal information where harm to the individual outweighs public good.

The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 Highlights of the Bill and Ordinance

- **The Bill allows for a person to be declared as a fugitive economic offender (FEO) if:** (i) an arrest warrant has been issued against him for any specified offences where the value involved is over Rs 100 crore, and (ii) he has left the country and refuses to return to face prosecution.

- **To declare a person an FEO, an application will be filed in a Special Court (designated under the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002)** containing details of the properties to be confiscated, and any information about the person's whereabouts. The Special Court will require the person to appear at a specified place at least six weeks from issue of notice. Proceedings will be terminated if the person appears.

- **The Bill allows authorities to provisionally attach properties of an accused, while the application** is pending before the Special Court.

- **Upon declaration as an FEO, properties of a person may be confiscated and vested in the central government**, free of encumbrances (rights and claims in the property). Further, the FEO or any company associated with him may be barred from filing or defending civil claims.

- **Key Issues and Analysis** Under the Bill, any court or tribunal may bar an FEO or an associated company from filing or defending civil claims before it. Barring these persons from filing or defending civil claims may violate Article 21 of the Constitution i.e. the right to life. Article 21 has been interpreted to include the right to access justice.

- **Under the Bill, an FEO's property may be confiscated and vested in the central government.** The Bill allows the Special Court to exempt properties where certain persons may have an interest in such property (e.g., secured creditors). However, it does not specify whether the central government will share sale proceeds with any other claimants who do not have such an interest (e.g., unsecured creditors).

- **The Bill does not require the authorities to obtain a search warrant or ensure the presence of witnesses before a search.** This differs from other laws, such as the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973, which contain such safeguards. These safeguards protect against harassment and planting of evidence.

- **The Bill provides for confiscation of property upon a person being declared an FEO.** This differs from other laws, such as CrPC, 1973, where confiscation is final two years after proclamation as absconder

The National Medical Commission Bill, 2017 Highlights of the Bill

- **The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC)**. The NMC will regulate medical education and practice. It will determine fees for up to 40% seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities.

- **The NMC will consist of 25 members.** A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and the part time members.

- **Four autonomous Boards have been set up under the supervision of the NMC**. These Boards will focus on undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, assessment and rating, and ethical conduct.

- **There will be a National Licentiate Examination for doctors to obtain a licence to practice after graduation**. This examination will also be the basis for admission to post-graduate medical courses.

- **State Medical Councils will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a doctor**. If the doctor is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to successively higher levels of authority.

- **Key Issues and Analysis Two-thirds of the members in the NMC are medical practitioners**. Expert committees have recommended that the regulator should consist of more diverse stakeholders in order to reduce the influence of medical practitioners in regulating medical education and practice.

- **The NMC will determine fees for up to 40% of the seats in private medical colleges and deemed universities**. There have been various arguments on fee capping by experts. It has been recommended by some experts that fees should be capped to enable access to medical education for all. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that fee capping would discourage entry of private colleges.

- **In cases of professional or ethical misconduct by medical practitioners, the practitioners can appeal a decision of the NMC to the central government**. It is unclear why the central government, and not a judicial body, is the appellate authority.

- **There is no requirement for periodic renewal of the licence to practice**. Some countries require periodic testing to ensure that practitioners remain up to date, fit to practice, and give good care to patients.

- **The Bill proposes a bridge course for practitioners of AYUSH to enable them to prescribe modern medicines**. There are differing views on this provision. While some emphasise the need for greater integration between traditional and modern schools of medicine, others consider this step harmful for the independent development of AYUSH.

Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change INITIATIVE FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

- **India declared its INDCs** in the run to COP-21 at Paris in December 2015. The third countrywide assessment of the status of tigers, co-predators and their prey, released in January, 2015 using the refined methodology as recommended by the Tiger Task Force.

- **The findings indicate a countrywide** 30% increase in tiger numbers in 2014 with an estimated number of 2,226 (range 1945-2491), as compared to 2010 estimation [1706] (range 1520-1909 tigers).

NATIONAL AIR QUALITY INDEX

- **Launched on October 17, 2014** to monitor the quality of air in major urban centres across the country on a real-time basis. Waste Management rules notified

- **On March 24, 2018, the Government** amended the Bio-medical Waste Management Rules, 2016 vide Notification G.S.R. 234(E) dated March 16, 2018. The Rules have been amended to improve compliance and strengthen the implementation of environmentally sound management of biomedical waste. Similarly, the Government has also amended the E-Waste Management Rules 2016 vide notification G.S.R. 261(E), dated March 22, 2018.

- **On March 18, 2016, Government notified Plastic Waste Management Rules**, 2016. Earlier, the draft rules, namely the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2015 were published by the Government of India on May 25, 2015. On March 23, 2016, the E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 were notified.

- **For the first time, the Rules brought the producers under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), along with targets.** The draft E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2015 had been notified for public consultation vide GSR No. 472 (E) dated 10 June 2015. New Bio-medical Waste Management Rules were notified on March 27, 2016. The rules mandated bar code system for proper control.

- **Construction & Demolition Waste Management Rules** notified for the first time. Under the Rules, duties have been separately earmarked for waste generators, service providers and contractors, state government and local authorities, CPCB and SPCBs and duties of concerned Central ministries.

- **Revised Hazardous Waste Management Rules** were notified on April 3, 2016 to ensure resource recovery and disposal of hazardous waste in an environment-friendly way. For the first time, rules made to distinguish between hazardous waste and other wastes.

- **Solid Waste Management Rules** were notified on April 5, 2016 after 16 years. States have also agreed to implement the new Waste Management Rules notified by the Ministry in March-April 2016.

NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME (NCAP)

- **Air pollution has increasingly** been becoming a serious concern, predominantly for health of the people. The impact of air pollution is not limited to health, but it gets extended to agriculture and general well-being of human, floral and faunal population.

- **The government has formulated National Clean Air Program (NCAP)** as a long-term, time bound national level strategy to tackle the increasing air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner at total tentative cost of Rs. 637 Crore.

- **Overall objective of the NCAP is comprehensive management plan** for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution besides augmenting the air quality-monitoring network across the country.

- **City specific air pollution abatement action plan for 100 polluting cities of the country similar to one for Delhi, under the NCAP.** Increasing number of monitoring stations, data dissemination, public participation on planning and implementation, setting up of Air Information Centre for data analysis, resource apportionment studies, setting up of national inventory are key components of NCAP.

- **Guidelines for Indoor Air Pollution and setting up of Rural Monitoring stations not address till date as some of the key components under NCAP** Focus on intensive awareness, training and capacity building drive, with specific impetus on augmentation of manpower and infrastructure facilities of CPCB and SPCB under the capacity building component of NCAP.

- **Separate components with emphasis on three-tier mechanism for review of monitoring, assessment and inspection for effective implementation** under NCAP. A credible, transparent, and accountable data collection and monitoring system that is available for timely, swift action to be ensured. Acknowledging the role of science, technology, engineering and innovation in addressing the environmental challenges with focus on India's strive towards sustainable development Technologies with potential for air pollution mitigation will be supported under the NCAP.

- **Setting up of an effective multi-layered institutional framework** for the successful implementation of targets towards air pollution abatement under the NCAP.

- **Since air pollution mitigation necessitates collaborative efforts**, the success of NCAP is expected to be determined by stakeholder participation and contribution. Accordingly, there is a need for consultation with various stakeholders viz. state government, relevant ministries, institutes, academic institutions, industries etc before launching the same. On the basis of detailed stakeholder consultation, NCAP is now under finalization.

GREEN SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- **Initiative under the ENVIS scheme for skilling the youth in the country.** 5 Lakh 60 thousand people to be imparted training between 2018-19 and 2020-21. The number of Courses to be offered during 2018-19 is 43. The number of Batches having completed the respective Courses till date (24.09.2018) is 26. The number of Trainees/ Master Trainers having successfully completed the Course (as on 24.09.2018) is 463.

- **The number of Trainees enrolled under the ongoing Courses is 780.** The Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) developed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) under the ENVIS Scheme is a new initiative to skill youth in environment, forest and wildlife sectors and enabling them to be gainfully employed or self-employed.

- **It was launched in June, 2017 on a pilot basis at 10 locations, spread over 9 bio-geographic regions of the country**, with a Basic Course and Advanced Course of 3 months' duration each, to skill the youth as Biodiversity Conservationists and Para-taxonomists respectively. Under the pilot of GSDP, 94 Trainees successfully completed the basic course qualifying as skilled Biodiversity Conservationists and 152 students completed the Advance Course on Para-taxonomy. BSI and ZSI were the nodal centres for the pilot program.

- **With the success of the pilot, the scope of the program is being extended to an all India level covering other green skills**, which include areas such as Pollution Monitoring (Air/ Water/ Noise/ Soil), ETP Operation, Waste Management, Forest Management, Water Budgeting & Auditing, Conservation of River Dolphins, Wildlife Management, Marine Taxonomy & Coastal Biodiversity, Mangroves Conservation, Bamboo Management & Livelihood Generation, etc.

- **All the courses are being forwarded to National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) for aligning with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF)** of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. Consequently, a whole pool of skilled resources in the form of Nature/Eco-tourist Guides/ Biodiversity Conservationists/ Para taxonomists/ Pollution Monitors/ETP Operators/Waste Management Specialists/Marine Taxonomist/ Wildlife Management Specialists etc. would be available to be employed in associated sectors. In the first stage, a pool of Master Trainers is being created who would further train the youth across the country.

Four-Year Achievements & Initiatives of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

- **Union Minister for Statistics and Programme Implementation**, Shri D.V. Sadananda Gowda today addressed media on the four-year achievements of the Ministry. Shri Vijay Goel, Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation was also present.

- **2. The last four years have been very significant years in terms of major policy decisions and adoption of new technology** and systems for more efficient and effective data management and dissemination. The major initiatives undertaken during the last four years to further improve statistical system to meet data requirements in emerging socio-economic scenario of the country included the following:

- **i. The Government adopted the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics** in 2016 for promotinggood practices and professional ethics in production and dissemination of Official Statistics. In furtherance of these Principles, a National Policy on Official Statistics is being evolved.

- **ii. The Collection of Statistics (Amendment) Act, 2017** was enacted to extend the jurisdiction of Collection of Statistics Act, 2008 to the State of Jammu & Kashmir.

- **iii. Base year revision for estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** and Consumer Price Index Number (CPI) were carried out. Steps have been initiated for next revision of base years.

- **iv. Government has recently constituted a Committee for Sub-National Accounts under the Chairmanship of Prof. Ravindra H. Dholakia**, ex-IIM, to upgrade existing norms and evolve new ones for computation of economic data at State and District levels for revision of the base year of GDP. The earlier such Committee was set up in the year 1972.

- **v. The Ministry notified General Guidelines on Quality Assurance for Official Statistics in April, 2018** for voluntary compliance by Government agencies for improving quality of statistical products as per the Generic National Quality Assurance Framework endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

- **vi. The Ministry has also notified General Guidelines on Socio-Economic Indices in April, 2018** to help the Government agencies in improving the quality of indices like the CPI, IIP and WPI.

- **vii. To address the demand for more frequent data on employment and unemployment, the Ministry** launched Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) in April, 2017.

- **viii. Draft National Indicator Framework has been developed for monitoring progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

- **ix. As part of Digital India Initiative of the Government, the Minsitry introduced new digital** technologies for data collection, compilation and dissemination. The Ministry has developed a web based micro data archive to enable users to access the data of socio-economic surveys and economic census.

- **x. The Ministry has participated** in Smart India Hackathon 2018 organised at Hubli for promoting innovation in Official Statistics. The prototype solutions developed by teams of engineering students are being considered for refinements.

- **xi. The National Statistical System Training Academy** (NSSTA) of the Ministry has imparted trainings on official statistics to more than 2700 personnel in 132 different courses.

- **xii. Through its scheme of Support for State Statistical Strengthening Program the Ministry** has provided financial assistance of Rs. 276 crore to 14 States/UTs for improving their Statistical Systems and more States/UTs are joining the scheme.

- **xiii. During the last four years**, NSSO has conducted all India surveys on diverse topics of relevance such as Land & livestock holdings, Housing conditions, unorganised Enterprises, Domestic Tourism, education, and health.

- **xiv. The results of 6thEconomic Census** were released in 2016 to provide a list frame of all enterprises and establishments engaged in various economic activities, and data on nature of activities and employment size.

- **xv. Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)** is an autonomous body under the Ministry. The R.C. Bose Centre for Cryptology and Security was set up in the Indian Statistical Institute for conducting research in the field of cryptology and security and organize training courses in the subject area. The ISI has also established Sampling and Official Statistical Unit (SOSU) at Kolkata for undertaking research in the theoretical, applied statistics and economics. Financial support was provided to ISI for development of infrastructure of Tezpur (Assam) Centre.

- **xvi. Government has taken various steps to strengthen statistical systems in North-Eastern Region.**Funding of Rs. 46.76 crore was provided to North-Eastern States of Sikkim, Mizoram and Manipur States for strengthening of their statistical systems and for improved data flow. Financial Assistance of Rs. 14.80 crore has been provided to the Directorates of Economics & Statistics of NE States to carry out various surveys of NSSO and strengthen and extend the reach of surveys in North-Eastern region.The process of opening of two new Regional Offices of NSSO at Aizwal (Mizoram) and Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh) and upgrading two Sub Regional Offices at Agartala (Tripura) and Imphal (Manipur) in North-East has been initiated.

- **xvii. Consistent to the federal spirit**, the Ministry has been conducting annual conferences of Central and State statistical organizations in which common statistical issues are discussed and shorted out.

- **xviii. India has been actively participating** at various international statistical forums. India hosted the 8th Meeting of Heads of National Statistics Offices of BRICS nations in 2016 at Jaipur, and the 8th Meeting of Heads of SAARC Statistical organizations in 2016 at Delhi. India has also participated in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) of United Nations Statistical Commission over the years.

- **xix. Government has declared 29th June,** the birth anniversary of Late Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis, as Statistics Day. A theme is announced on each Statistics Day for focusing attention by statistical agencies for a year. The 12thStatistics Day was celebrated on 29th June, 2018, which was the 125th birth anniversary of Late Prof. Mahalanobis. The theme "Quality Assurance in Official Statistics" was announced on this day. A commemorative coin of Rs 125 and circulation coin of Rs 5 denomination were released by Hon'ble Vice President of India.

- **xx. A number of amendments have been made in the Guidelines for Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** during the last four years to cater to the welfare requirements of the general public, including convergence with flagship schemes of the Government. A new Integrated MPLADS portal has been developed for use of all the stakeholders. It provides a single point of reference for all stakeholders including Hon'ble MPs, District authorities and general public at large, thus brining transparency and accountability in execution of works carried out under the Scheme. All MPLAD fund releases are being made only through this website. An informative dashboard has been developed for the MPLADS which provides information at various levels and time lines.

- **xxi. The Ministry is responsible for monitoring of Central Sector Infrastructure Projects costing Rs. 150 crore or more**. As on 01.03.2018, a total of such 1304 projects are being monitored through Online Computerised Monitoring System (OCMS). During last four years, the number of projects under monitoring has increased from 710 to 1304. The monitoring has resulted in reduction of cost overrun with respect to original cost from 19.4% in March, 2014 to 13.4% in February, 2018 and reduction in the time overrun with respect to original schedule from about 30% in 2014 to 20% in 2018.

Sabarimala temple opens to women of all ages

- **What's the issue?** The legend has it that the temple deity Ayyappa followed celibacy all through his life. Therefore, women devotees of menstruating age are considered "impure" by supporters of the ban and are prohibited from entering the temple, on the pretext that they would disturb the celibacy of the deity.

- **Views of the court:** On one side we pray to goddesses; on the other, women of a certain age are considered 'impure'. This dualistic approach is nothing but patriarchy practised in religion. Exclusion on grounds of biological and physiological features like menstruation was therefore unconstitutional as it is violative of the right to equality and dignity of women.

- **Hence, Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act of 1965**, which mandates the prohibition in Sabarimala temple, ultra vires the Constitution. The Rule violated the fundamental right of a Hindu woman to offer worship at a place of her choice. Right to worship is equally available to men and women.

- **Dissenting views:** Justice Indu Malhotra, the lone woman judge on the Constitution Bench, dissented from the majority opinion. She held that the determination of what constituted an essential practice in a religion should not be decided by judges on the basis of their personal viewpoints. She held that essentiality of a religious practice or custom had to be decided within the religion. It was a matter of personal faith. Constitutional morality in a pluralistic society gave freedom to practice even irrational or illogical customs and usages.

- **Harmonization of fundamental rights** with religion included providing freedom for diverse sects to practise their customs and beliefs. Therefore, the Judge held that there were strong, plausible reasons to show that Ayyappa devotees had attributes of a religious denomination. They have distinct names, properties. Besides, the Sabarimala temple was not funded out of the Consolidated Fund.

- **Significance of the verdict:** The Supreme Court's ruling establishes the legal principle that individual freedom prevails over purported group rights, even in matters of religion. Devotees of Lord Ayyappa do not constitute a separate religious denomination and that the prohibition on women is not an essential part of Hindu religion.

- **Beyond the legality of the practice**, the court has also sought to grapple with the stigmatisation of women devotees based on a medieval view of menstruation as symbolising impurity and pollution. The decision reaffirms the Constitution's transformative character and derives strength from the centrality it accords to fundamental rights.

- **Way ahead:** Devotion cannot be subjected to the stereotypes of gender. Stigma built around traditional notions of impurity has no place in the constitutional order, and exclusion based on the notion of impurity is a form of untouchability. Any rule based on segregation of women pertaining to biological characteristics is indefensible and unconstitutional.

Model Code of Conduct

- **EC has also held that after dissolution** caretaker government as well as the central government is barred from announcing new schemes in particular state from date of dissolution of legislative assembly till new House is elected.

- **Model Code of Conduct(MCC):** What is MCC? These are the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections mainly with respect to speeches, polling day, polling booths, election manifestos, processions and general conduct.

- **Aim: To ensure free and fair elections.** When it comes into force? So far, the Model Code of Conduct came into force immediately on announcement of the election schedule by the commission. The Code remains in force till the end of the electoral process.

- **Status:** The need for such code is in the interest of free and fair elections. However, the code does not have any specific statutory basis. It has only a persuasive effect. It contains what is known as "rules of electoral morality". But this lack of statutory backing does not prevent the Commission from enforcing it.

- **Evolution:** The Commission issued the code for the first time in 1971 (5th Election) and revised it from time to time. This set of norms has been evolved with the consensus of political parties who have consented to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit.

- **What it contains?** The salient features of the Model Code of Conduct lay down how political parties, contesting candidates and party(s) in power should conduct themselves during the process of elections i.e. on their general conduct during electioneering, holding meetings and processions, poll day activities and functioning of the party in power etc.

Appointment of Lokpal Committee's Terms of Reference:

- **The search committee** will start functioning soon.It will recommend names for Lokpal chairperson and members. It can also consider names other than those recommended by the search committee.

- **Highlights of the Lokpal Act of 2013:** The Act allows setting up of anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the State-level. The Lokpal will consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members. The Lokpal will cover all categories of public servants, including the Prime Minister. But the armed forces do not come under the ambit of Lokpal.

- **The Act also incorporates** provisions for attachment and confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means, even while the prosecution is pending. The States will have to institute Lokayukta within one year of the commencement of the Act. The Act also ensures that public servants who act as whistleblowers are protected.

- **Powers: The Lokpal** will have the power of superintendence and direction over any investigation agency including CBI for cases referred to them by the ombudsman. As per the Act, the Lokpal can summon or question any public servant if there exists a prima facie case against the person, even before an investigation agency (such as vigilance or CBI) has begun the probe. Any officer of the CBI investigating a case referred to it by the Lokpal, shall not be transferred without the approval of the Lokpal.

- **An investigation** must be completed within six months. However, the Lokpal or Lokayukta may allow extensions of six months at a time provided the reasons for the need of such extensions are given in writing. Special courts will be instituted to conduct trials on cases referred by Lokpal.

#LooReview Campaign About the Loo Review campaign:

- **It is aimed** to encourage all local guides in India to rate and review public toilets on Google Maps. This campaign will allow all citizens to locate public toilets in their cities on Google Maps, Search and the Assistant and also provide feedback on the same.

- **Local Guides** are people who share reviews, photos, and knowledge on Google Maps to help people explore the world.

- **Significance:** The joint campaign to be run throughout October and November 2018 is an effort to increase the awareness and ease of locating public toilets across India. 500+ cities in India with more than 30,000 toilets with the name of "SBM Toilet" are currently live on Google Maps.

- **One of the objectives** of the SBM- U is to provide sanitation coverage through public toilet facilities across cities in India for achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. There is now a need to ensure that the ODF status is sustained through continuous usage and proper maintenance of public toilets. The 'Public toilets near me' feature will benefit citizens, particularly women and senior citizens, who often find it difficult to find access to clean toilets in the public space.

- **The feedback** provide by local guides through the Loo Review campaign will press upon the Urban Local Bodies to take proactive steps to improve public toilet facilities across the country.

UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) What is UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF)?

- **UNSDF 2018-2022** outlines development cooperation strategy between Union Government and United Nations Country Team in India in support of achievement of India's key national development priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- **It was framed** following highly participative process, in consultation with government entities, civil society representatives, academia, and private sector.

- **Focus areas under** it include poverty and urbanization, health, water, and sanitation, education, climate change, nutrition and food security, clean energy, and disaster resilience; skilling, entrepreneurship, job creation, gender equality and youth development.

- **UNSDF also includes** set of UN flagship programs that are aligned with major government schemes. These flagship programs will be scalable innovative, multi-sectoral solutions to some of most pressing development challenges that India faces and also serve as catalysts for increased investment of development finance.

- **UNSDF programmes** range from affordable housing for poor to increasing access to clean energy in rural off-grid areas, protecting all children from vaccine-preventable diseases, providing quality education for all children and skilling for young people, especially young girls and ending stunting to improving child sex ratio.

- **Support:** Across these outcome areas, UN will support Union Government in south-south cooperation in partnership with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The total planned budget outlay for implementation of UNSDF is approximately Rs. 11000 crore, of which 47% is planned to be mobilized through course of implementation from multiple sources, including private sector and government.

- **Targets:** The programmatic work outlined in UNSDF targets seven low-income states viz. Bihar, Jharkhand, MP, Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and UP along with North-East region and aspirational districts identified by the NITI Aayog. It will work on improving lives of most marginalized, poor, and vulnerable communities and people in the country, especially women and girls.

Fighting fake drugs through blockchain Use of technology and its significance:

- **The partners** will pilot a real drug supply chain using blockchain decentralized ledger and IoT software. By piloting a real drug supply chain using blockchain and IoT software, they can support governments and healthcare experts to quickly detect fake drugs. These will aide authorities to enforce penalties on wrong-doers with easy, proof-based data.

- **How it works?** Oracle's blockchain software permanently registers a drug's record in the manufacturer's drug supply chain (serial number, labelling, scanning), leaving no scope for record tampering.

- **At every point** of hand change, it records the drug's movement — from manufacturer to logistics, from stockist to hospital, or from pharmacy to consumer. In case of a fake drug, the software will detect irregularity and notify the concerned nodal point.

- **Background:** The Indian pharmaceutical industry is the third largest in the world in volume, accounting for 10% of the world's production. However, a recent report by World Health Organisation estimates 20% of all drugs sold in India are fake. Also, as the largest producer of generic drugs in the world, India is reported to be the source of 35% of all counterfeit drugs sold worldwide.

- **What are Blockchains?** Blockchains are a new data structure that is secure, cryptography-based, and distributed across a network. The technology supports cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, and the transfer of any data or digital asset. Spearheaded by Bitcoin, blockchains achieve consensus among distributed nodes, allowing the transfer of digital goods without the need for centralized authorisation of transactions. The present blockchain ecosystem is like the early Internet, a permissionless innovation environment in which email, the World Wide Web, Napster, Skype, and Uber were built.

Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) Initiative

- **About the initiative:** The initiative is aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.

- **Compressed Bio-Gas** plants are proposed to be set up mainly through independent entrepreneurs. CBG produced at these plants will be transported through cascades of cylinders to the fuel station networks of OMCs for marketing as a green transport fuel alternative.

- **The entrepreneurs** would be able to separately market the other by-products from these plants, including bio-manure, carbon-dioxide, etc., to enhance returns on investment.

- **It is planned to roll** out 5,000 Compressed Bio-Gas plants across India in a phased manner, with 250 plants by the year 2020, 1,000 plants by 2022 and 5,000 plants by 2025. These plants are expected to produce 15 million tonnes of CBG per annum, which is about 40% of current CNG consumption of 44 million tonnes per annum in the country. At an investment of approx. Rs. 1.7 lakh crore, this initiative is expected to generate direct employment for 75,000 people and produce 50 million tonnes of bio-manure for crops.

- **There are multiple** benefits from converting agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste into CBG on a commercial scale:

- **Responsible waste management,** reduction in carbon emissions and pollution. Additional revenue source for farmers. Boost to entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment. Support to national commitments in achieving climate change goals. Reduction in import of natural gas and crude oil. Buffer against crude oil/gas price fluctuations.

- **Significance:** This move has the potential to boost availability of more affordable transport fuels, better use of agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste, as well as to provide an additional revenue source to farmers.

- **The initiative holds** great promise for efficient municipal solid waste management and in tackling the problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions. Use of CBG will also help bring down dependency on crude oil imports.

- **Background:** Bio-gas is produced naturally through a process of anaerobic decomposition from waste / bio-mass sources like agriculture residue, cattle dung, sugarcane press mud, municipal solid waste, sewage treatment plant waste, etc. After purification, it is compressed and called CBG, which has pure methane content of over 95%.

- **What is CBG?** Compressed Bio-Gas is exactly similar to the commercially available natural gas in its composition and energy potential. With calorific value (~52,000 KJ/kg) and other properties similar to CNG, Compressed Bio-Gas can be used as an alternative, renewable automotive fuel. Given the abundance of biomass in the country, Compressed Bio-Gas has the potential to replace CNG in automotive, industrial and commercial uses in the coming years.

- **Compressed Bio-Gas** can be produced from various bio-mass/waste sources, including agricultural residue, municipal solid waste, sugarcane press mud, distillery spent wash, cattle dung and sewage treatment plant waste. The other waste streams, i.e, rotten potatoes from cold storages, rotten vegetables, dairy plants, chicken/poultry litter, food waste, horticulture waste, forestry residues and treated organic waste from industrial effluent treatment plants (ETPs) can be used to generate biogas.

- **Way ahead:** The potential for Compressed Bio-Gas production from various sources in India is estimated at about 62 million tonnes per annum. Going forward, Compressed Bio-Gas networks can be integrated with city gas distribution (CGD) networks to boost supplies to domestic and retail users in existing and upcoming markets. Besides retailing from OMC fuel stations, Compressed Bio-Gas can at a later date be injected into CGD pipelines too for efficient distribution and optimised access of a cleaner and more affordable fuel.

Parakram Parv:

- **What is it?** To showcase the courage, valour and sacrifice of Armed Forces during Surgical Strikes conducted in 2016, 'Parakram Parv' is being observed from 28-30 September 2018.

- **Indian Army conducted** surgical strikes in 2016 which had strategic ramifications and were aimed to dissuade inimical adversary from adopting the path of violence and to ensure an environment of peace for the Nation.

Ministry of Defence ONE RANK ONE PENSION

- · **Resolved after four decades & announced by PM** · Status Report on implementation of OROP benefits as on 30.09.2017 and compiled up to 31.12.2017 As per the reports received from the CGDA, a sum of Rs. 4,161.45 crores, Rs. 2,397.22 crores, Rs. 2,320.7 crores and Rs. 1,859.72 crores have been paid towards first, second, third and fourth instalment of OROP arrears respectively.

- **20,43,354 Ex-Servicemen/family pensioners**, 15,94,063 Ex Service men, 15,71,744 Ex-Servicemen and 13,28,313 Ex-Servicemen are the beneficiaries during these four instalments respectively.

- **Total arrears paid Rs. 10,739.09 crores.**

OTHER MEASURES FOR EX-SERVICEMEN

- · **Number of scholarships** under Prime Minister Scholarship Scheme has been enhanced from 4000 to 5500 from academic year 2015-16.

- · **Marriage Grant for daughter** has been enhanced from Rs. 16,000/- to Rs. 50,000/- from April 2016.

- · **Web portal** has been launched by Kendriya Sainik Board on March 11, 2016 for online process of applications.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017:

- · **INS Kalvari-** Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated the naval submarine INS Kalvari to the nation on 14 December 2017.

- · **Brahmos**, the World's fastest supersonic cruise missile created history in November 2017 when it was successfully flight-tested first time from the Indian Air Force's frontline fighter aircraft Sukhoi-30MKI.

- · **The surface-to-air** missile Akash was successfully launched. · The first ever tri-services exercise INDIRA between India and Russia was conducted in October, 2017. · Special campaign to celebrate Armed Forces Flag Day to honour the martyrs and the men in uniform.

- · **The first ever Indian circumnavigation** of the globe by all-women crew on Indian Navy sailing vessel INSV Tarini. The Tarini was flagged off on 10th September 2017 and is expected to return to Goa in April 2018. The expedition titled 'Navika Sagar Parikarma' is in consensus with the national policy to give women power to attain their full potential.

- **Other Initiatives:** · **Defence Travel System** has been rolled out wherein defence units can book tickets online. The project has been implemented by Railways. Both rail and air travel modules have been developed. As on 28th December 2017, 5759 defence units have been covered under the system out of the existing 10675 units. A total of 12,19,969 beneficiaries have been enrolled on the system till date. On an average, 5.1 lakh rail tickets are being booked through the system with an average expenditure of ☐70 crores per month. The system is continuously under up-gradation based on new IT developments, new requirements and feedback.

- · **A comprehensive web based** interactive Pension Disbursement System for Defence Pensioners will be established. This system will receive pension proposals and make payments centrally. This will reduce the grievances of defence pensioners.

SIMPLIFIED 'MAKE-II':

- **Major Steps Towards 'Make in India' in Defence Production** Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Raksha Mantri Smt Nirmala Sitharaman, in its meeting on 16 January 2018, cleared a simplified 'Make-II' procedure to enable greater participation of industry in acquisition of defence equipment.

- **This process will greatly help import** substitution and promote innovative solutions. This simplified 'Make-II' procedure will amend the existing 'Make Procedure' in Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)-2016.

SURGICAL STRIKES

- **In order to protect Indian borders** and put an end to cross border terrorism Indian Army conducted surgical strikes in PoK on 29th September, 2016

- **Surgical Strikes reflect zero tolerance for terror** · On 18th September 2016, terrorists struck at an army camp at Uri and martyred our Jawans. In response:

- · **Indian Army conducted surgical strikes at several terrorist launch pads to pre-empt infiltration by terrorists.** · Significant casualties were caused to terrorists and those providing support to them.

- · **Indian army** struck a blow to terrorist infrastructure and designs. · International community reacted overwhelmingly in India's favour.

RAFALE DEAL FOR BETTER SECURITY

- **Signing of agreement for purchase of 36 Rafale Aircraft:** The Government of India signed an Inter-Government Agreement (IGA) with Government of France for procurement of 36 Rafale aircraft on September 23, 2016. The delivery of the aircraft would commence in September 2019 and would be completed by April 2022. The IGA includes initial consignment of weapons, maintenance support through Performance Based Logistical (PBL), simulators and associated equipment. The IGA also includes discharge of 50 percent offsets by the French Industrial Suppliers.

- **Rafale is an omni-role fighter**, which will provide long range capability to engage targets in depth and will provide a strong weapons and systems capability edge over our adversaries. The weapons include air-to-air Beyond Visual Range (BVR) METEOR missile which is superior to the proposed MICA BVR Missile for MMRCA package. For ground targets, Rafale is equipped with long range SCALP precision guided air-to-ground weapon which will provide a strong attack capability for striking precision targets. In addition, the Rafale for IAF has certain Indian specific enhancements which will provide the aircraft with better capabilities including engine start from high altitude airfields.

- **AGNI-V** · Test flight on 26th December, 2016. · The test flight further boosted India's indigenous defence capabilities and deterrence levels.

Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances Department of Pensions & Pensioners' Welfare : Pension Policy improvements

- · **Implementation of recommendations** of 7th CPC for pensioners: Orders were issued on 04.08.2016 for regulating pensionary benefits of employees retired/retiring on or after 01.01.2016.

- · **The minimum pension has been increased from Rs. 3500/- p.m. to Rs. 9,000/- per month.**

- · **The minimum disability** pension and family pension covered under CCS(EOP)Rules of a Government servant/family of the deceased Government holding a pensionable post has been enhanced to Rs. 18,000/- per month vide OM No.1/4/2016-P&PW(F) dated 2-8-2017

- · **The ceiling of Retirement** and Death gratuity has been increased from the existing Rs.10 lakh to Rs.20 lakhs. · With effect from 1.1.2016, the rates of ex-gratia lump sum compensation being paid to the families of employees who die in performance of duty has been increased from Rs. 10-15 lakhs to Rs.25-45 lakhs;

- · **The Constant Attendant** Allowance being paid to pensioners drawing disability pension has been increased from the existing Rs.4500/- p.m to Rs.6750/- p.m, vide OM No.1/4/2017-P&PW(F) dated 2/8/2017

- · **Amount of Fixed Medical Allowance** payable to the Central Government Pensioners residing in areas not covered under CGHS has been increased from Rs. 500/- per month to Rs. 1000/- per month w.e.f. 01.07.2017. · Orders have been issued on 26.08.2016 for extension of benefit of gratuity to NPS employees, on the same terms as applicable to employees appointed before 01.01.2004.

- · **Based on 7th CPC recommendations** separate order have been issued on 12.05.2017 for revision of pension of pre-2016 pensioners/family pensioners w.e.f. 1.1.2016 by notional pay fixation. This has brought the pension of past pensioners at par with that of the employees retiring on or after 1.1.2016.

- · **Concordance tables for fixation** of notional pay and pension/family pension of employees who retired/died in various grades during the 4th, 5th and 6th Pay Commission periods have been issued vide this Department's OM No. 38/37/2016-P&PW(A) dated 6th July, 2017.

- · **Earlier, only 1/3rd of pension** was being restored after 15 years in the case of employees who got absorbed in PSUs, etc. and had taken 100% lump-sum amount in lieu of pension. Orders have been issued on 23rd June, 2017 and 21st July, 2017 allowing restoration of full pension after expiry of commutation period of 15 years to all such absorbee pensioners.

Simplification of pension claim procedure

- · **Procedure for sanction of Pension** has been simplified. Time taken in processing of pension papers has been reduced from two years to one year.

- · **Earlier, a retired Government** servant had to approach his pension disbursing bank for collecting his Pension Payment Order. The procedures have been simplified to enable handing over of the PPO on retirement from the office where the Government servant last served.

- · **Requirement of affidavits/attestations** by Gazetted officers has been dispensed with.

- · **On death of a Government employee/pensioner**, dependent parents and disabled child/sibling are eligible to receive family pension. Since a fresh PPO was required to be issued in their favour, they had to face a lot of difficulty in getting family pension started. The rules have been amended to allow co-authorization of disabled children/siblings and dependent parents in the PPO issued to the retiring employee. This would enable the Bank to start family pension to them without the need for a fresh PPO from the pension

sanctioning authority.

- · **Earlier, divorced daughter was eligible** for family pension if the divorce took place during the lifetime of the parents in receipt of pension/family pension. Orders have been issued on 19th July, 2017 stating that the Family Pension to divorced daughter would be allowed even in such cases where divorce proceedings had been filed during the life time of employee/pensioner or his/her spouse but divorce took place after their death.

- · **In order to claim the Fixed Medical Allowance,** the retired Government employees residing in cities/areas not covered under CGHS were required to submit a certificate from the CMO/CGHS to the effect that their residence was not covered by CGHS. The requirement of this certificate has now been dispensed with for sanctioning Fixed Medical Allowance (FMA) to pensioners.

Liberalization and simplification of GPF (CS) Rules, 1960

- · **Provisions for grant of withdrawal** and advances have been simplified by allowing simple declaration by the subscriber. No further documentary evidence will be required.

- · **Limits for withdrawals have been raised** and procedures simplified especially for activities of house building and education of children, where the costs have gone up manifold over the last two decades.

- · **Scope has been widened to include primary**, secondary and higher education covering all streams and institutions, advance can be taken for travel and tourism also.

- · **Maximum time limit of 15 days prescribed** for sanction and payment of advance/withdrawal.

Initiatives towards Digitization & Reform

- · **Pensioners' Portal: Pensioners' Portal** is a web-based single platform created in 2007 with the objective to disseminate pension related information, as well as to provide redressal of the pensioners' grievances at a single point. In the last four years the Portal was strengthened by adding the facility of online pension sanction process and experience sharing platform of central government retirees. It also provides the facility of self-assessment of Pensionary dues by the online pension calculator, latest updated orders, personalized road-map for retirees. In September 2017, a mobile app of the department was launched to reach out to a larger number of pensioners and the services of the Pensioners Portal was made available through this App.

- · **Digital Life Certificate (DLC)** implementation initiative: To ease the life certification process, DeitY has developed an on-line life certificate submission system which is based on Aadhar number. In order to ensure smooth implementation of the DLC method of submitting Life Certificate, this Department organized a tripartite coordination between UIDAI, Jeevan Pramaan team of MeitY and Banks. This Department is also promoting use of submission of Digital Life Certificate among the pensioners so that they can submit life certificate from anywhere without waiting in long queue in banks. Till date 93% of pensioners accounts have been seeded with Aadhar number which enables them to avail the digital life certificate in future.

- · **E-Office implementation:** The Department of Pensions & Pensioners' Welfare went completely paperless and 100% files are now on e-office. These efforts were recognised in an Award ceremony organised by the DARPG which is the coordinating department for e-office .

- · **CPENGRAMS:** is web-based grievance redressal and monitoring system. It facilitates pensioners to register their grievance online and view the progress till disposal of their case through system. In the last four years the system achieved rising popularity which indicates the building of confidence in the system. The number of grievances registered during the last three years and disposed of during the same period are:

- · **Deep Dive Analysis of grievances** for delivering quality disposal: Initiatives have also been introduced to strengthen the quality in grievance disposal. The department conducted a Root Cause Analysis of the grievances received and identified Focus Ministries as well as kinds of grievances in order to target the reforms in the right direction.

- · **All Ministries combined Pension Adalats:** Further, to strengthen the grievances redressal mechanism this department launched the new initiative of Pension Adalat wherein unresolved grievances in CPENGRAMS are listed and the petitioner along with the concerned Ministry/Department, Banks, CPAO etc. are brought at one common platform with an objective to provide on the spot resolution of grievance.

- **a. In the first Pension Adalat** under the auspices of the Hon'ble MoS(PP) was conducted in September 2017, out of 29 grievances, 26 cases were resolved on the spot. b. The second Pension Adalat was organized on February 9, 2018, again under the auspices of MOS (PP) wherein 31 cases were disposed of on-the-spot in a single sitting covering grievances of Pensioners from 17 Ministries/Departments.

- · **BHAVISHYA:** It was observed that 25% of the grievances are due to delay in initiation in pension. To make the pension sanction process transparent an online pension sanction module 'Bhavishya' was developed. In the first phase Bhavishya was implemented in the main secretariats of Ministries in 2015 and after its successful implementation it was made mandatory for all the Central Govt. Ministries/Departments w.e.f. 01.01.2017. This digitization has gone a long way in ensuring seamless and accurate Pension processing for all the Central Govt Employees on the system. It has had the following results:

- **ü There is complete transparency** in processing a Pension case and the retiree keeps getting regular updates about the stage of his Pension processing; ü The system is capable of giving real-time data of pension processing right up to the stage of first credit of pension into the account of the Pensioner; ü The system has made the concept of e-PPO possible and based on the Bhavishya e-PPO was launched on 1st March, 2017. It is a landmark in digitization of Pension processing.

- **ü As of now 35523 cases have been processed through Bhavishya.** ü As of now 458 offices with 6508 DDOs of civil ministries/departments are on the board of Bhavishya processing 26,117 pension cases of government employees.

Awareness campaigns for Pensioners and Officials dealing with pension cases:

- **To reduce** the pensioners grievances, which are approximately, 2500 per month, Department of Pension& PW organized the following:

- · **Pre-retirement Counselling:** It is observed that pension grievances arise due to ignorance of updated rule position amongst dealing staff or unawareness of their entitlement procedures for claim amongst the retirees/pensioners. To address the above issue this department started conducting Pre-Retirement Counselling for the retirees, specially those of CAPFs living in far-flung areas, deployed at the frontiers including Shillong, Jaisalmer etc.

- · **Training of Trainers workshops:** 11 Training of Trainers workshops were conducted and a pool of 670 Master trainers was created.

- · **Pensioners' Awareness camps:** For the benefit of pensioners, awareness camps were organized at Shillong, Aizwal, Kohima, Guwhati, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Agartala for creating awareness on updated entitlements of pensioners/family pensioners.

- · **Training to Dealing staff w.r.t.** pension cases of Ministries/ Department: A total number of 543 officials from all Ministries/Departments were trained on latest Rules/Regulations for Pension settlement, specially issues arising out of Family Pension and Disability Pension.

- · **Awareness through Print Media:** To reach out to the pensioners, especially family pensioners, in far flung regions of the country, the Department brought out an Information bulletin in 159 newspapers including national and regional newspapers covering all states and UTs. This bulletin was on useful and updated provisions on pension related entitlements and about CPENGRAM.

- · **Awareness through Visual Media:** The department made extensive use of Radio and Television to spread awareness among Pensioners about Life Certificate and DLCs. Scroll messages and Video clips were telecast on Door darshan (DD) and other private TV channels.

- · **Awareness through internet/ Social Media:**Department website has been revamped comprehensively and it became user friendly as well as "Divyang friendly". This Department also made its presence felt in Social Media platforms like Facebook and twitter.

SANKALP initiative:

- **This is a unique initiative launched in 2014** in order to reorient retired people towards an active post-retired life. The stake-holders in this scheme includes Pensioners & their Associations, Employees approaching retirement age, organisations involved in social welfare projects & companies both public and private conducting activities under CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).

- · **In order to gainfully utilize the skill** and experience of retired employees towards nation-building activities and social work, a new initiative was undertaken, wherein certain NGOs listed on the 'Darpan' website of Niti Aayog were called for an interactive session with retiring government employees. These sessions were held in the month of January 2018 in Delhi and Mumbai.

- · **Tamil Nadu Pensioners' Association** helped some 500 people in restoration of their eyes through cataract surgeries;

- · **Adoption of 11 MCD schools by 16 pensioners for improving the quality of education and environment in the schools;**

- · **1224 Pensioners engaged by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC)** as Inspecting Officers/Members of the Flying Squad during examinations in various cities etc.

ANUBHAV initiative:

- **At the direction of Prime Minister**, the Department of Pensions has developed ANUBHAV, an online system of experience haring by retiring government employees.

- **ANUBHAV portal gives retiring officials** an opportunity to record their experiences in the government and create a wealth of institutional memory for future generations for better governance.

- **To encourage retirees to submit quality write ups**, an award scheme has also been instituted. In 2017, contributors of 16 write ups were awarded by the Hon'ble MOS(PP). As on 31.3.2018, 4941 write-ups have been published.

Swachh Bharat initiative:

- · **An abandoned store lying unused** for the last one decade was modernised and a Facilitation centre for the pensioners was carved out on the ground floor of Lok Nayak Bhawan, in the Department of Pension & PW.

- · **Similarly, an unused dilapidated space**, measuring some 2000 sq.ft. in Janpath Bhawan was modernized for creating a special CPENGRAM cell and call center for handling Pensioners' grievances.

- · **Pensioners Associations were motivated** to organize Swachh Bharat movement in their localities. Several cleaning campaigns were organized by the associations in Guwahati, Bengaluru, Allahabad, Vadodara, Assam and Bihar.

Ministry of Culture

- **AADARSH SMAARAK: 25 ASI monuments named** as Aadarsh Smaarak to promote tourist facilities 75 more Adarsh Monuments protected by ASI have been identified and included in the list of "Adarsh Smarak" and the same are also being included in 'Swachh Paryatan Mobile App' launched by the Ministry of Tourism.

- **DEDICATED TOURIST TRAINS:** Jyotirling circuit, Sukhmangal circuit (Bengaluru-Madurai) & Dakshin Dham Circuit

- **E-TICKETING** · There are 116 ticketed monuments and 32 museums under the protection of ASI (Archaeological Survey of India). E-ticketing facility has been launched in coordination with Canara Bank with the aim of providing online booking facility for visitors. · Moreover, the facility is proving to be less expensive when

- **Compared to manual ticketing system which was prevalent earlier. Portal: http://asi.payumoney.com/#/** · The e- Ticket sales has been increased by 10 times and the revenue increased by 60 times from 9th October, 2016 to 8th November, 2016.

- **EK BHARAT SHRESHTHA BHARAT' SCHEME:** To promote inter cultural aspects among various states INCREDIBLE INDIA 2.0: To promote tourism in India

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)- Housing for All

- **To address the gap** in housing demand and supply in urban areas in respect of Economically Weaker Sections, Low and Middle Income Groups and meet the target of "Housing for All" by 2022, with an aim to provide a decent pucca home

- **Achievements:** Cabinet approved creation of National Urban Housing Fund (NUHF) for Rs. 60,000 crores As on 31st March 2018, Ministry has sanctioned 43.87 lakh houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). More than 21.28 lakh houses have been grounded and about 5.2 lakh houses have been completed. (Including RAY component)

- **REAL ESTATE ACT** · Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act,2016 brought into force from May 1, 2017 to protect interests of buyers and developers and bring more transparency and accountability in the sector including both residential and commercial real estate.

- **NEW METRO RAIL POLICY** Government has approved the new Metro Rail Policy on 18.08.2017. It lays emphasis on 'last mile connectivity'. Presently, Metro work is in progress in 11 cities of the country.

MULTI MODAL LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT POLICY

- **An effective multi modal logistics** and transport sector will make our economy more competitive. A specific program for development of multi-modal logistics parks, together with multi modal transport facilities, will be drawn up and implemented.

- **The Ministry of Commerce** has been entrusted with the responsibility for finalizing the logistics policy and ensuring inter-ministerial coordination for Multi Modal Logistic Parks (MMLPs). Infrastructure Status has been bestowed on Logistics on 21.11.2017.

ATAL MISSION FOR REJUVENATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION (AMRUT)

- **Objective:** To ensure water taps to over 2 cr urban households in mission cities by 2019 besides expanding sewerage and drainage networks, Non-motorised transport and providing open and green spaces

- **Achievement:** · Service Level Improvement Plans (SLIPS) for all 500 mission cities approved three years ahead of the mission period with a project investment of Rs.77,640 cr.

SMART CITY MISSION Launch Date: 25.6.2015

- **Objective:** To ensure core infrastructure to improve quality of living through area based development in and around 100 cities based on inclusive and sustainable urban planning and development. Achievements: · 99 cities identified through competition. · Total cost of Projects (Rs Crores):201979. · Total Population impacted: 9.9 Cr.

- **SWACHCH BHARAT URBAN: Launch Date: 2.10.2014** Objective: To make 4,041 cities and towns Open Defecation Free and clean by October, 2019 Achievements: Milestones Achieved (as of data received from the concerned division) · 46,36,158 individual household toilets constructed so far. · 3,06,064 Community and Public Toilet seats constructed so far. · 2477 cities have been so far declared Open Defecation Free. · 61,846 urban wards covered under 100% Door to Door collection of solid waste. · Waste to Compost total achievement 13.11 lakh TPA from 145 Plants. · Around 88 Mega Watts of energy is being produced from waste.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

- **The Government** has up-scaled the target for overall renewable energy capacity by more than 5 times to 175 GW by the year 2022 which includes 100 GW from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro-power.

- **Initiatives/Achievements** 1) National Solar Mission: National Solar Mission (JNNSM) was launched on 11th January, 2010. The Mission targets include · Deployment of 20,000 MW of grid connected solar power by 2022 · 2,000 MW of off-grid solar applications including 20 million solar lights by 2022, · 20 million sq. m. solar thermal collector area. · A capacity of 19.5 GW has already been achieved upto February 2018,

- **a) Defence Scheme:** Objective: To set up over 300 MW of Grid-Connected Solar PV Power Projects by Defence establishments and Para Military Forces with viability gap funding. Achievements: Against a target of 300 MW, 357.50 MW projects have been sanctioned under the scheme. (As on 27 Dec, 2017)

- **b) Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) scheme** Objective: To Set up 1000 MW of Grid Connected Solar PV Power projects by CPSUs and GOI organizations with Viability Gap Funding in three years period till 2017-18. Achievements: Entire 1000 MW have been allocated to various CPSUs under the scheme. (As on 27 Dec, 2017)

- **c) Bundling scheme Objective:** To facilitate the scale up of solar capacity addition under NSM Phase-II and achieve economies of scale, to supplement grid power, to facilitate fulfilment of RPO requirement of the obligated entities, To facilitate speedier implementation of the new projects to be selected to meet the Phase-II target of NSM and providing long term visibility and road map for solar power development enabling creation of India as manufacturing hub in the Solar PV. Achievements: Tranche-I: 3000 MW has been tendered (As on 27 Dec, 2017)

- **d) Canal Bank/ Canal Top scheme Objective:** Development of Grid Connected Solar PV Power Plants on Canal Banks and Canal Tops in the country. Achievements: Solar PV Power Plants on Canal Banks and Canal Tops with 50 MW capacities under each category (total 100 MW) have been approved to 8 States

- **e) VGF Scheme Objective:** To set up solar photovoltaic power projects on build, own and operate (BOO) basis by the Solar Power Developers (SPDs) Achievements: Under VGF scheme, 750 MW, 2000 MW and 5000 MW of grid connected solar power projects have been taken up.

- **f) Solar Park scheme Objective:** To set up of Solar Parks, each with the capacity of 500 MW and above and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects to be developed in next 5 years in various States Achievements: 35 Solar parks have been approved in 21 States with aggregate capacity of 20,514 MW. (As on 27 Dec, 2017)

- **Solar Schemes Launched by the Ministry** Keeping in view the technology upgradation and economies of scales, the upper limit of VGF was revised on 17.02.2017 to @ Rs. 1.10 Cr./MW for all projects irrespective of sizes for which tenders were not brought out.

- **Scheme for Setting** up of 750 MW Grid-connected Solar PV Power Projects under Batch-1 of Phase-II of JNNSM with Viability Gap Funding Support

- **The selection of the bidders** has been based on the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) required for the project in an ascending order upto the full capacity. Viability Gap Funding (VGF) is limited to 30% of the project cost or 2.5 crore per MW, whichever is lower. Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) has signed PPA with such project developers for purchasing entire power from the project for 25 years at 5.45 Rs. per unit (4.75 Rs. per unit for projects availing accelerated depreciation).

- **Scheme for Setting** up of 2000 MW Grid-connected Solar PV Power Projects under Batch-III of Phase-II of JNNSM with Viability Gap Funding Support

- **The Project developer** is provided a viability gap funding based on his bid. The upper limit for VGF is kept at Rs.1.0 Crore/MW for open category (Rs. 1.31 Crore/MW for projects in DCR category).

- **Scheme for Setting up of 5000 MW** Grid-connected Solar PV Power Projects under Batch-IV of Phase-II of JNNSM with Viability Gap Funding Support

- **The Project developer** is provided a Viability Gap Funding based on his bid. The upper limit for VGF is kept at Rs. 1.0 crore/MW for open category and Rs. 1.25 crore/MW for projects in DCR category. SECI will select projects through competitive e-bidding based on minimum VGF sought (quoted in INR/MW), or there may be a provision for quoting a discounted tariff (quoted in INR/kWh).

Grid Connected Rooftop

- **CFA is 30%** of the benchmark cost for general and 70% CFA for North Eastern and Special Category States for residential, social and institutional sector.

- **Pilot-cum-demonstration** project for development of grid connected solar PV power plants on canal banks and canal tops · Financial support of Rs.3 crore/MW or 30% of the project cost, whichever is lower, for Canal Top SPV projects and Rs. 1.5 crore/MW or 30% of the project cost, whichever is lower, for Canal Bank SPV projects.

- · **Total CFA** of upto Rs.225 crore for 100 MW (50 MW on Canal Tops and 50 MW on Canal Banks) to be disbursed over a period of maximum 2 years post sanctioning of the plants as under: · upto 40% on sanctioning of the projects. · 60% on successful commissioning of the projects. · Service charge to SECI @1% of project cost.

- **Scheme for setting** up of 1000 MW of Grid-Connected Solar PV Power projects by Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) under Batch- V of Phase II of JNNSM · Viability Gap Funding (VGF) provided through SECI at a fixed rate of Rs. 1 Cr/ MW for projects where domestically produced cells and modules are used and Rs. 50 lakh/ MW in cases where domestically produced modules are used. · VGF released in two tranches as follows: i. 50% on successful commissioning of the full capacity of project (COD). ii. Balance 50% after one year of successful operation of the project.

- **2) Distribution of Solar Pumps Scheme:** Achievement: 1.47 lakh Solar Pump have been installed in the Country as on 31.12.2017.

- **3) Surya Mitra Scheme: Objective:** To create 50,000 trained personnel within a period of 5 years (2015-16 to 2019-20).

- **Achievements:** Over 11,000 Surya Mitra's have been trained as on 27.12.2017.

Surya Mitra Mobile App:

- · **"Surya Mitra" mobile App launched on 07.06.2016.** · The GPS based mobile app has been developed by National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) which is an autonomous institution of Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE).

- · **The Surya Mitra Mobile App** is currently available in Google play store, which can be downloaded and used across India. This App is a high end technology platform which can handle thousands of calls simultaneously and can efficiently monitor all visits of Suryamitra's.

- · **The trained Suryamitra's** who opts for entrepreneurship have joined in the Mobile App in several states. These Suryamitras are once again sensitized by NISE on soft skills Customer Relations Management, Punctuality and are now ready to deliver the services.

- **Solar Powered Railway Stations** · It is proposed to feed about 7,000 stations with solar power in the medium term. A beginning has already been made in 300 stations. Works will be taken up for 2,000 railway stations as part of 1000 MW solar mission.

- · **28.75 Mega Watt (MW)** solar roof top capacity has been installed on 350 stations including major stations like Varanasi, Katra, New Delhi, Old Delhi, Jaipur, Secunderabad and Kolkata. Order has been placed for 37 MW solar roof top capacity by Zonal Railways/PUs (covering 250 stations). Another 93 MW solar capacity has been finalized (covering950 stations). Further, work is under progress at 200 stations of D & E category. Overall planning/execution has already been made for 2750 stations and other buildings. Balance stations (4250) are being planned in a phased manner by 2020-21.

- · **With Indian efforts**, the International Solar Alliance has now become a legal entity. Its' headquarter has been set up in India.

- **Green Power Capacity Addition** A total of 11788 MW of grid-connected power generation capacity from renewable energy sources has been added so far this year (January 2017 to November 2017) in the country.

- **Sector-wise highlights of achievements** · Largest ever Wind Power capacity addition of 5502.39 MW in 2016-17 exceeding target by 38%. During 2017-18, a total 568.71 MW capacity has been added till 31.12.2017, making cumulative achievement 32848.46 MW. Now, in terms of wind power installed capacity India is globally placed at 4th position after China, USA and Germany.

- · **During 2017-18**, a total 4323.1 MW (including 207.92 MW Solar Roof Top) capacity has been added till 30.11.2017, making cumulative achievement 16611.73 MW (including 863.92 MW Solar Roof Top).

- · **So far, 1.47 lakh** Solar Pump have been installed in the Country as on 31.12.2017.

- · **Solar projects of capacity** 23656 MW have been tendered and LoI for 19,340 MW issued.

- · **A capacity addition** of 0.59 GW has been added under Grid Connected Renewable Power since last three and half years from Small Hydro Power plants.

- · **Biomass power includes** installations from biomass combustion, biomass gasification and bagasse co-generation making a cumulative achievement to 8181.70 MW.

- · **Family Type Biogas Plants** mainly for rural and semi-urban households are set up under the National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMP). During 2017-18, against a target of 1.1 lakh biogas plants, 0.15 lakh biogas plants installations has been achieved making a cumulative achievement to 49.8 lakh biogas plants as on 30.11.2017.

Wind Power

- · **During the year 2016-17**, wind power capacity addition of 5.5 GW was made, which is highest ever wind power capacity addition in the country during a single year. The present wind power installed capacity in the country is around 32.75 GW. Now, in terms of wind power installed capacity India is globally placed at 4th position after China, USA and Germany.

- · **India has a strong manufacturing** base of wind power equipment in the country. Presently, there are 20 approved manufacturers with 53 models of wind turbines in the country up to a capacity of 3.00 MW single turbines. Wind turbines being manufactured in India are of international quality standards and cost-wise amongst the lowest in the world being exported to Europe, USA and other countries.

- · **The wind power potential** of the country has been reassessed by the National Institute for Wind Energy (NIWE), it has been estimated to be 302 GW at 100 meter hub-height. Online wind atlas is available on NIWE website. This will create new dimension to the wind power development in the country.

- · **Signing of PPAs/ PSAs** for first SECI wind auction (1000 MW, tariff discovered was Rs. 3.46 in Feb 2017). Second wind auction of 1000 MW which resulted in lowest tariffs of Rs. 2.64/ unit.

- · **India has long coastline** where there is a good possibility for developing offshore wind power projects. The cabinet has cleared the National Offshore Wind Energy Policy and the same has been notified on 6th October 2015. Certain blocks near Gujarat and Tamil Nadu coast line have been identified. First LiDAR installed and commissioned off Gujarat coast for gathering wind resource data.

- · **Wind Forecasting: Based** on wind forecasting experience of Tamil Nadu with NIWE, MoUs for forecasting done with Gujarat and Rajasthan.

- · **Meso scale map prepared** for wind resource at 120 meter height, as most of turbine hub heights being installed are more than 100 meters. Total assessed wind resource of India would go up from 302 GW at 100 m to about 600 GW at 120 m); MESO scale map also prepared for Offshore wind. However for actual use these would have to be correlated with actual site specific measurements.

- · **Bidding guidelines** for wind auction under Section 63 of Electricity Act have been notified in December to Ministry of Power.

- **Small Hydro Power A capacity addition of 27.07GW** of renewable energy has been reported during the last two and half years under Grid Connected Renewable Power, 0.59 GW from Small Hydro Power.

- **Biomass Power Biomass power includes installations** from biomass combustion, biomass gasification and bagasse co-generation. A cumulative achievement to 8181.70 MW has been reported as on 30.11. 2017.

- **Family Size Biogas Plants** Family Size Biogas Plants mainly for rural and semi-urban households are set up under the National Biogas and Manure Management Program (NBMMP).

- **During 2017-18**, against a target of 1.10 lakh biogas plants, 0.15 lakh biogas plants installations has been achieved making a cumulative achievement to 49.8 lakh biogas plants.

Ministry of Food Processing Industries ● Budget 2018-2019

- Ø **Operation Greens:** Rs. 500 crore allocated for 'Operation Greens' to address price volatility of perishable commodities like Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP)

- Ø **Allocation for Ministry** of Food Processing has been doubled in the Budget 2018-19 to Rs. 1400 Crores

- Ø **Specialized Agro Processing Financial** Institutions to be established to ensure Timely, Accessible and Affordable Credit to Food Processing sector

- · **Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana:** The Schemes of the Ministry have been restructured and new schemes have been approved by Cabinet and launched as Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana. The SAMPADA Scheme will target creation of Infrastructure and increasing capacities of processing and preservation in entire supply chain of food processing sector right from farm gate to retail outlets.

- **The New Scheme** will help in integrating food processing units and food trade with the farmers creating huge opportunities for employment of increasing income of the farmers. PMKSY is an umbrella scheme incorporating ongoing schemes of the Ministry like Mega Food Parks, Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, etc. and also new schemes like Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters, Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages, Creation / Expansion of

Food Processing & Preservation Capacities.

- ● **World Food India, 2017:** Ministry organized World Food India 2017 in Delhi and showcased investment potential of India in the food processing sector and attracted investment worth $18.8 billion in the entire supply chain for inclusive development. Food Street was the World food India's most attractive highlight. Food Street is an experiential platform that will bring together culinary practices, flavours, fragrances from the world's cuisines, and celebrate India's rich cultural heritage and diverse uniqueness of its produce to create contemporary renditions and fusion food.

- ● **Investor's Portal 'Nivesh Bandhu' Launched.** http://foodprocessingindia.co.in/ Information on potential and opportunities for investment in the food processing sector and incentives provided by the Central and State Governments were made available to the prospective investors at a single point. The queries of the investors were received and answered through the portal guiding them and making it easier for them to take decision.

- ● **Government has allowed 100% FDI** for trading including through e-commerce, in respect of food products manufactured or produced in India. 100% FDI is already permitted in manufacturing of food products through automatic route. This will provide impetus to the foreign investment in food processing sector, benefit farmers immensely and will create vast employment opportunities.

- ● **Mega Food Parks:** Setting up of state of art testing facilities in all the 42 Mega Food Parks to encourage export of agri-commodities realizing their full potential.

- · **Creation of a Special Fund** of Rs. 2000 crore in NABARD. Availability of affordable credit to Mega Food Parks and food processing units set up therein Rs. 540.62 crore sanctioned to 15 Projects and Rs. 255.78 crore disbursed.

- ● **Grievance Redressal System Strengthened.** Under the infrastructure schemes of Mega Food Parks and cold chain, a committee of three Independent Monitors was constituted to address the grievances of applicants whose proposal for Mega Food Parks and Cold Chains could not be selected. The committee also provides personal hearing to the applicants before disposing of their grievances.

- ● **Food Map of India launched.** The Food Map enables investor to take decision with regard to locating their projects as the food map showed mapping of the potential of food processing in surplus production areas.

- ● **Project Monitoring process streamlined.** The close monitoring of the projects regularly led to completion of three Mega Food Parks in comparison to two projects in previous six years and completion of 14 cold chain projects as against 12 in last six years. This has also lead to significant improvement in utilization of plan fund allocation nearly 200% in all the schemes.

- ● **Food and agro-based processing unit and cold chain infrastructure** have been classified under agriculture activities for Priority Sector Lending. Availability of additional credit for food processing activities and infrastructure.

- ● **Service Tax on pre-conditioning, pre-coding, ripening, waxing, retail packaging and labelling of fruits** and vegetables exempted in cold chain projects. This is a big relief in terms of tax exemption to the cold chain operators as this facility was only available to the farmers at farm gate but not to the cold chain operators. This enhanced the viability of cold chain projects, encouraging more investment in the sector.

- ● **To enhance the transparency and reduce human interface on-line software has been developed and put in use** for filing of claims for the infrastructure development projects. This has also been expanded to other schemes.

- ● **Investment tracking and facilitation Desk** of Invest India has been set up in the Ministry. The desk will identify new potential investors and approach them in a focussed and structured manner for investment and follow-up the investment cases by providing hand holding services. The desk will also assist Ministry in organising roadshows both in India and abroad and organizing investment meets.

- ● **e-NAM to be expanded from 250 to 585 APMCs.** e-NAM Market to have primary processing facilities e-NAM will be provided assistance for creating primary processing to cleaning, grading, packaging. This will encourage and make easier direct procuring of raw-material by the processing units and retail traders resulting in increased income to farmers. Primary Processing will increase value addition of the farmers produce and fetch better price. This will also lead to quality consciousness.

- ● **Model Law on Contract Farming prepared to integrate farmers.** The Contract Farming Law will integrate backward integration of the food processors with the farmers and attracting investment in post-harvest management activities leading to increased benefit to the farmers and reduction in wastages.

- ● **A Dairy Processing and Development Fund of Rs. 8000 core set up in NABARD.** The Fund is used to modernize old and obsolete milk processing units particularly in cooperative sector and will result in enhancing milk processing capacity thereby adding more value to the produce of the farmers and increasing their income ● Common Food Processing Incubation Center for Shallots launched in Perambalur

- **Additional fiscal concessions:** Reduction in Excise Duty on Refrigerated Containers from 12.5% to 6%. Reduction in Basic Custom Duty on Refrigerated Containers from 10% to 5%. 5% Basic Customs Duty as presently available under project imports for cold storage, cold room also extended for Cold Chain including pre-cooling unit, pack house, sorting and grading lines and ripening chambers. Excise Duty on Machinery reduced from 10% to 6%.

Mega Food Parks:

- **Foundation Stone for the following Mega Food Parks laid** Punjab Agro Industries Corporation Mega Food Park Project, Ludhiana Mega Food Park developed by KINFRA at Palakkad in Kerala Mega Food Park developed by KSIDC at Alappuzha in Kerala Maize Based Mega Food Park in Kapurthala, Punjab A Mega Food Park is likely to benefit about 25000-30000 farmers apart from creating employment for 5000-6000 persons, especially in rural areas. The Mega Food Park project at Udham Singh Nagar is being inaugurated on 5th April, 2018 and Agartala (Tripura) is at advanced stage for operationalisation.

- **NABARD has sanctioned term loan of Rs. 540.62** Crore to 11 Mega Food Park projects and 1 designated Food Park and 3 processing units under 'Food Processing Fund' of Rs. 2000 Crore and out of this an amount of Rs. 255.78 Crore has been disbursed. The Ministry has notified 181 designated food parks in different States for the purpose of availing affordable credit from special fund with NABARD.

- **Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure:** 1. Ministry of Food Processing Industries is assisting 238 integrated cold chain projects (Including completed and ongoing projects) having capacity of 7.64 lakh metric tonnes of cold storages, 231.75 metric tonnes per hour of individual Quick Freezing(IQF), 104.99 lakh litres per day of Milk processing/storage and 1383 reefer vans

- **A total of 119 integrated cold chain projects have been completed/operationalized as on 31.03.2018** and out of this, 82 integrated cold chain projects have been completed/operationalized during 2014-2018. With the operationalization of these 82 projects, Ministry has created an additional capacity of 2.65 lakh metric tonnes of cold storages, 82.45 metric tonnes per hour of individual Quick Freezing(IQF), 34.55 lakh litres per day of Milk processing/storage and 516 reefer vans during 2014-2018.

- **. The guidelines of Scheme** have been revised on the basis of feedback and experience of this Ministry to make them investor friendly.

- **. On an average,** each cold chain project benefits to around 500 farmers in fruits and vegetables sector and around 5000 farmers in dairy sector and creates employment for 100 persons.

- **Under the Scheme** of Setting up/ Modernization of Abattoirs, one project at Panji (Goa) has been operationalized.

- **10 Food Testing Labs have been completed.** FSSAI has simplified product approval: approved a large number of new Additives harmonized with the International Codex Standards. notified an amendment to the regulations as a result of which non-standardized food products called proprietary foods (except novel food and nutra-ceuticals) that use ingredients and additives approved in the regulations will no longer require product approval. This has provided considerable relief to the industry.

- **The National Institute of Food Technology**, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) at Kundli, Sonepat, Haryana and Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT) at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu are being developed by the Government as the Centres of Excellence. The pass-outs of these institutes have got 100% placements.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs

- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs):** EMRs are being set up by the Government to give best quality education to tribal children in their own environment. As on 31.03.2018, 271 EMRSs are sanctioned and 190 are functional in various States.During the last four years, 106 new EMRSs with total capacity of 50,880 students have been sanctioned (30 in 2014-15, 32 in 2015-16, 30 in 2016-17 and 14 in 2017-18). Further, 51 EMRSs were made functional during last four years.

- **Hostels for Tribal Girls and Boys:** There are a total of 1545 hostels, sanctioned by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, for tribal girls and boys in the country at present. Out of this, the number of hostels for boys is 544 hostels and 1001 hostels are for girls.

- **Scholarship Scheme:** During 2014-15 to 2017-18, a total of Rs. 5404.97 crore were distributed as pre-matric and post-matric scholarship to about one crore ST students. Institutional Support for Development & Marketing of Tribal Products/Produce (Central Sector Scheme): The total grants released under this scheme have increased from Rs. 4190 lakh in 2014-15 to Rs. 4495 lakh in 2017-18.

- **Launch of e-commerce portal of TRIFED and M-commerce android app and 'Tribes India' banner:** In a path breaking initiative, the Minister of Tribal Affairs, in the month of March 2018, launched the Tribes India banner on Snapdeal, Amazon, Paytm and GeM for marketing of Tribal Products through these e-commerce portals. With this, more than 55 thousand tribal artisans connected to TRIFED will get access to local as well as international markets. Also, the e-commerce portal of TRIFED i.e. www.tribesindia.com and M-commerce android app 'Tribes India' was also launched.

- **Scheduled Tribe Component:** Tribal Affairs Ministry has now been mandated to monitor Scheduled Tribe Component of funds of Central Ministries by NITI Aayog. An online monitoring system has been put in place with web address stcmis.gov.in.. The allocation under Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) was increased from Rs. 21,811 crore in 2016-17 to Rs. 32,508 crore in RE 2017-18. In the BE of 2018-19, Rs. 39,135 crore has been allocated under STC for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

- **Minimum Support Price (MSP) to Minor Forest Produce (MFP):** Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce scheme (MSP for MFP Scheme) has now been expanded to 24 Minor Forest Produces in all States from the initial 10 MFPs in 9 States in 2013-14.

- **Skill Development:** An amount of Rs. 1019.27 Crore has been released to various states under the scheme Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS) and Grants under Article 275(1) during 2014-15 to 2017-18 for skill development of more than 3,37,000 (Three Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand) male and female tribal beneficiaries in a wide gamut of trades.

- **Forest Rights Act:** Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA), until 30th, January, 2018 as much as 1 lakh 39,266 Community Forests Rights (CFR) claims have been received from 20 states. Out of this 64,328 (46.19%) claims have been recognised.

- **Aadi Mahotsav: Showcasing Tribal Culture, Commerce & Cuisine:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with TRIFED organized a National Tribal Festival Aadi Mahotsav from 16th November, 2017 to 30th November, 2017. The total sale of tribal artisans during the Mahotsav was Rs. 4.10 Crores. This Mahotsav also organised at Jaipur, Bhopal, Ranchi, Chandigarh and Guwahati during November - December, 2017 and has become a continuous process now.

- **Museums for Tribal Freedom Fighters:** A state-of-the-art Tribal Museum of national importance in Gujarat State is being constructed. The Ministry has also approved proposals for setting up of museums in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala to highlight struggle & sacrifices of tribals during freedom struggle.

- **New Tribal Research Institute and Tribal Repository:** During the year 2017-18, based on the proposals received from the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim, funds have been provided for establishment of new tribal research institutions at Itanagar, Kohima and Assam Lingzey, near Gangtok. Ministry has developed a web page for use as tribal repository (www.tribal.nic.in/repository) in which documents, folks songs, photos, videos regarding their evolution, place of origin, lifestyle, eating habits, architecture, education level, traditional art, folk dances and other anthropological details.